United Nations A/S-19/PV.1

General Assembly
Nineteenth Special Session

Official Records

1st plenary meeting
Monday, 23 June 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the Chairman of the delegation of Malaysia

The Temporary President: I declare open the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The Temporary President: I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/S-19/20)

The Temporary President: Next, I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/S-19/20, which contains a letter addressed to me by the Secretary-General in which he informs the Assembly that 17 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The Temporary President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly, at the beginning of each session, shall appoint, on the proposal

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of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

In accordance with precedents, I propose that the members of the Credentials Committee of the nineteenth special session should be the same as those of the fifty-first regular session of the Assembly — namely, China, the Dominican Republic, Gabon, the Netherlands, Paraguay, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone and the United States of America.

If there is no objection, I shall consider the Credentials Committee constituted accordingly.

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: In this connection, may I invite the attention of the members of the Assembly to a note verbale from the Secretary-General, dated 7 February 1997, in which it was stated that credentials should be issued for all representatives to the special session, in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. I would urge all members to submit the credentials of representatives to the Secretary-General as soon as possible.

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Election of the President of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session

The Temporary President: It has been proposed that the nineteenth special session should take place under the presidency of the President of the fifty-first regular session, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia.

I take it that the Assembly wishes to elect him President of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: I extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail and invite him to assume the presidency.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Razali took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Razali Ismail, President of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session

The President: I make this speech mindful that we are gathered here to make an objective and honest assessment of the commitments made at the Earth Summit five years ago. Our task of reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21 must go beyond simply calculating ratios of progress versus deterioration. This is a time for critical reflection and concrete action.

Recognizing that we are tied in a network of mutuality and common destiny, and in a spirit of partnership, I extend a warm welcome to representatives of different sectors of civil society. For the first time they as stakeholders, shall participate in the United Nations General Assembly alongside Governments.

In Rio, we recognized that the Earth's biosphere — that thin layer of land, air and water that forms the surface tissue of our beautiful blue planet and upon which all life on Earth depends — is being progressively destroyed. We as a species, as a planet, are teetering on the edge, living unsustainably and perpetuating inequity, and we may soon pass the point of no return. Only a blueprint for global action would ensure our survival. Thus was born the Rio compact and Agenda 21 — a new spirit of partnership, a social, ethical and political contract forged on interdependence, intergenerational equity and common but differentiated responsibilities.

There have been some notable achievements since Rio, if somewhat scattered and uneven. Prime among them has been the unfolding of Agenda 21 into a living document beyond the realm of conferences. National strategies, local initiatives, public consciousness and environmental agreements have proliferated, accompanied by tentative reforms of institutions and programmes. On the global level, population growth has stabilized, infant mortality has fallen, life expectancy has increased and nutrition has improved.

The elaboration of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development into legal principles and international law, as enshrined in the conventions, is also a notable achievement. But the end result remains paltry due to the slowness in dealing with issues, the inconsistent fulfilment of agreements and the weak ability to enforce compliance and ensure equitable benefits for all. In this context, should one rush to conclude a

convention on forests if the protracted time needed for the negotiations would provide an excuse for further delays in securing the rights of forest dwellers and implementing best practices?

Five years on from Rio, we face a major recession — not economic, but a recession of spirit, a recession of the very political will that is essential for catalysing real change. The visionary ambition of Agenda 21 is tempered by some damning statistics that show that we are heading further away from, not towards, sustainable development. We continue to consume resources, pollute, and spread and entrench poverty as though we were the last generation on Earth. Failures in the management of natural resources continue to create scarcities, to invite conflict, to pose dangers to public health and to incite social disintegration. Those who made serious commitments at Rio have not followed through on their promises. This is a shame, made tragic because impressive gains in science and technology have advanced our understanding and presented policy options and choices of action to those in power who could make a difference.

We must strip ourselves of old excuses for not tackling effectively enough the driving forces of environmental degradation and underdevelopment. This special session will certainly have failed in the eyes of the world if it produces nothing more than stirring rhetoric that seizes the headlines and exhortations "to continue to do more". We are all familiar with the tactics being used: posturing, spinning declarations of intent, pointing the finger at others, pandering to interest groups, giving weight to short-term profits and immediate electoral gains, and emphasizing the need for clearer definitions, dialogue and information-gathering. These prevent plans of action from truly being operationalized into programmes of implementation.

I challenge Governments North and South to tackle the real obstacles to implementing Agenda 21. We must avoid the temptation to concentrate on just so-called emerging issues. The critical issues are the cross-sectoral issues, those that link environment and development. Since Rio we have seen a further continuation of North-South trench politics. Governments and non-governmental organizations from the developed world vigorously promote environmental protection without shouldering the greater burden of adjustments in consumption and production patterns. Nor do they emphasize with equal balance the importance of fulfilling global and national responsibilities. Meanwhile, many developing countries continue to emphasize their right to development without placing sufficient stress on social equity and transparent, participatory decision-making. Neither approach bodes well for the future.

The Denver Summit communiqué lists priority issues for future work on sustainable development without making any reference to poverty eradication and the special needs of developing countries. The political appeal of environmental issues stole the show. Levels of development assistance are not even graced with the tag of "business as usual". Official development assistance has sharply declined from $55 billion to less than $50 billion since Rio. There are no signs that the decline will be reversed, and this remains a blow to international cooperation. This figure is less than a third of the $150 billion spent on average each year by industrialized countries to procure, research and develop weapons of war. We must be warned that market mantras alone will not secure sustainable development. Neither will the lure of global integration deliver sometime tomorrow on promises we are unwilling to recommit to today and were unable to honour yesterday.

Given the global interdependence recognized at Rio, this meeting not only requires us to reaffirm our previous commitments, but to address a new set of challenges that I pose here as questions. To Governments: "How will you engage in and fulfil global commitments without fearing that you have forsaken the need to look after your national interests first?" Surely it is not that national interests should be compromised in favour of broad international considerations, but simply that national interests can, and should, be defined in terms that encompass the well-being of other States and peoples, tying it into one's own prospects and prosperity.

To the private sector: "Are the imperatives of profit, new markets, competitive edge and commercial secrecy so great that you remain reluctant to have an open and responsible dialogue with other stakeholders?" To members of civil society: "How do you account for five years of lost opportunity?" You are an essential component in this process as producers, consumers, taxpayers, and as supporters and critics of the Governments gathered here today. It is your responsibility to actively participate in sustainable development in your own lives and to demand no less of your political, economic and social institutions.

Finally, it is fitting that we hold this special session three days after the General Assembly adopted the Agenda for Development. The United Nations continues

to work on all aspects of development, seeing it as the vital ingredient in achieving global security and improving social quality and conditions of life for millions. However, its continued weakening, both politically and financially, stretches it too thin, assigns to it missions impossible and makes it a convenient whipping boy. If true value continues to be placed on finding global solutions to global problems, a strengthened United Nations is essential.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

Statement by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General: Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: a very warm welcome to you all.

I am delighted to see so many Heads of State and of Government and so many senior officials in this great Hall today. Your presence here is a welcome demonstration of political will. You have come because you are determined that the process begun five years ago at Rio de Janeiro should not falter. You are convinced that more must be done to safeguard life on our planet, today and for the generations to come.

Our task at this special session, therefore, is to turn that political will into deeds and action. We must aim this week to set a sure course for the world community into the new millennium on this most urgent and vital global issue. Our task is to build on what has been achieved. Our foundation, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the Rio process, is a firm foundation.

UNCED was a landmark in the new global diplomacy. It brought together Governments, non-governmental organizations and concerned individuals as never before. Its objectives, scope and focus were loftier than those of any previous conference, its basis of support broader and its implementing partners more varied. UNCED marked a conceptual breakthrough, too. It gave practical effect to the relationship between environment and development in the new concept of sustainable development. The concept embraces the human and social dimension of sustainable development. It generated new hope that poverty and deprivation can be attacked with greater clarity and coherence.

As we review progress since UNCED, we see some signs of progress. Many countries have reported to the Commission on Sustainable Development that they have established national coordinating mechanisms for sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21. All three of the conventions — on climate change, biodiversity, and combating desertification — entered into force a very short time after they were opened for signature.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Phasing out chlorofluorocarbons — CFCs — is almost complete in the industrial countries. This is an impressive achievement. There has been notable progress in switching to renewable energy sources, such as geothermal, wind-power and photovoltaic systems. The number of people with access to safe water increased by 472 million between 1990 and 1994.

But the balance sheet also has a negative side. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report shows that more than a quarter of the developing world's people still live in absolute poverty. There is concern that there has been virtually no progress in following up UNCED commitments for the transfer of concessional finance and environmentally sound technology to developing countries to assist them in implementing Agenda 21.

Carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise. Worldwide fossil fuel consumption increased from 7.5 billion tons of oil equivalent in 1992 to 8 billion tons in 1996. The rate of depletion of natural forests is at last slowing, but total forest loss continues at an unacceptable rate. While more people have access to safe water, one third of the world's population lives in countries facing moderate to severe stress on water resources. Experts have calculated that, unless there are new efforts to manage global water resources, there will be a world water crisis by the year 2025.

In the world's oceans, the majority of species subject to fishing are now fully exploited, or over-exploited. We are now at, or nearing, the critical point at which overall fishing stocks — not simply single species — begin to decline. It is vital that the Convention to Combat Desertification be implemented as soon as possible. Halting and reversing the march of deserts, especially in Africa, remains an urgent necessity.

The world is hoping for serious progress at the third session, in December, of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held at Kyoto.

At stake this week is the capacity of the international system of States to act decisively in the global interest. The United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes, and the specialized agencies, have worked together to put new ideas, programmes and ways of work into global efforts for sustainable development. My programme for reform in the United Nations will usher in a broader process of renewal in the United Nations. But we must go even further. Governments and the United Nations must join with the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations in a new partnership. Such a partnership, based on a recognition of mutual interest and a readiness to share responsibilities, would link all global environmental stakeholders in an alliance for action. Agenda 21 was unprecedented. We must act in unprecedented ways to implement it.

Failure to act now could endanger our planet irreversibly, unleashing a spiral of increased hunger, deprivation, disease, and squalour. Ultimately, we could face the destabilizing effects of conflict over vital natural resources. But if we raise our sights to the well-being of our planet, and of all those on it, today and in generations to come, we will not fail. We must not fail.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his statement.

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 (A/S-19/14)

The President: I now give the floor to the Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development, His Excellency Mr. Mostafa Tolba of Egypt.

Mr. Tolba (Egypt), Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development: It is a great honour for me to present to the General Assembly at this important special session the report of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which acted as the preparatory body for this session.

Preparations for the five-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was both complex and participatory. The meeting of the CSD was not just a three-week event.

The Commission greatly benefitted from, first, a number of important meetings and initiatives organized in support of the Earth Summit + 5 review by Governments, international institutions and nongovernmental organizations; secondly, an important expert input from the Intersessional Working Group of the Commission when formal intergovernmental discussions on the possible outcome of the special session were launched; thirdly, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests of the CSD, which over the past two years considerably advanced global understanding, commitment and consensus on the world's forests agenda; and fourthly, the report of the United Nations High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development.

The negotiations during the CSD itself were enriched by a crucial political input from the high-level segment held at the commencement of its deliberations, which was attended by a large number of ministers and policy-makers from all parts of the world. The high-level meeting focused on ways and means to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21 and gave guidance and impetus to the negotiations in the CSD. The negotiations were also enriched by dialogue sessions with the representatives of all major groups in civil society that shared with Governments their views, concerns and expectations. Highlights of these activities are reflected in the report submitted for the Assembly's consideration.

The report of the Commission also contains the text of the proposed final outcome of the special session. This document covers an assessment of progress, or lack thereof, achieved since the Rio Summit and a set of specific recommendations on further action needed to accelerate movement towards meeting the challenges of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development is, perhaps, one of the most difficult and, at the same time, one of the most pressing and promising goals we face at the turn of the next millennium. It requires on the part of all of us - States, groups and individuals - commitment, action, partnership and, sometimes, sacrifices of our traditional life patterns and personal interests. No wonder that, in spite of a large number of important proposals already recommended by the CSD for adoption by the special session, far from everything in the report of the CSD before the Assembly was agreed during the Commission's session.

During the previous week, intensive intergovernmental consultations were held on all of the outstanding issues contained in the report of the Commission, as well as on the text of the draft political statement. These two documents - the draft political statement and what I would call the draft "programme for further implementation of Agenda 21" - should be seen in conjunction and are expected to be adopted simultaneously by the special session after further negotiations in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

What the Commission and the intergovernmental consultations that followed managed to achieve is to crystallize those most sensitive and politically difficult issues on our common agenda which may not be simply resolved by further drafting or additional exchanges of argumentation. Agreement on these issues will require genuine political will and responsible political decisions in the spirit of partnership and cooperation.

These issues include, but are not limited to, first, strengthening international commitment to means of implementation aimed at accelerating progress towards sustainable development, particularly in the area of financial resources with special reference to the role of official development assistance, economic instruments and their link to trade, mobilization of domestic financial resources, and the nature of the global mechanism for the Convention to Combat Desertification; secondly, how to continue the process of intergovernmental work on forests; thirdly, a message to the December 1997 Kyoto meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change containing the Assembly's views regarding possible actions with respect to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions: and fourthly, the feasibility of introducing a tax on aviation or aviation fuel.

The results of the work of the Commission - both those which already enjoy consensus and those which require further negotiations — are brought to the General Assembly for consideration and action. I sincerely hope that the leaders of the nations attending this session will say their decisive collective word, which will help all of us to make the lives of this and future generations more prosperous, safe and rewarding.

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Organization of the session (A/S-19/2)

The President: On the basis of the practice of previous special sessions and of the proposals outlined in document A/S-19/2, I should like to suggest the following arrangements for the organization of the nineteenth special session.

Regarding the Chairmen of the Main Committees, I should like to propose that the Chairmen of the Main Committees of the fifty-first regular session serve in the same capacity at the nineteenth special session.

I take it that the Assembly adopts this proposal.

It was so decided.

The President: Accordingly, I should like to inform the Assembly that the Chairmen of the Main Committees at this special session are the following:

The Chairman of the First Committee, His Excellency Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou of Belarus; the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), His Excellency Mr. Alounkèo Kittikhoun of the Lao People's Democratic Republic; the Chairman of the Second Committee, Mr. Arjan Hamburger of the Netherlands; the Chairman of the Third Committee, Mrs. Patricia Espinosa of Mexico; and the Chairman of the Sixth Committee, His Excellency Mr. Ramón Escovar-Salom of Venezuela.

As concerns the Fifth Committee, in the absence of its Chairman, the Secretariat was informed that Mr. Syed Rafiqul Alom of Bangladesh, Vice-Chairman of the Fifth Committee, would be Acting Chairman of the Committee for the duration of the special session.

I should like to propose that the Vice-Presidents of the fifty-first regular session serve in the same capacity at the nineteenth special session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: The Vice-Presidents of the nineteenth special session are therefore the representatives of the following Member States: Andorra, Angola, Bahamas, Burundi, China, Cyprus, France, Ghana, Honduras, Latvia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Niger, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sudan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I should now like to propose that the Assembly establish an ad hoc committee of the whole of the nineteenth special session.

May I take it that the Assembly adopts this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: Concerning the election of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole, it has been recommended that the Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development, His Excellency Mr. Mostafa Tolba of Egypt, serve in the same capacity in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Nineteenth Special Session.

I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly at its nineteenth special session to elect him by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The President: I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Mostafa Tolba on behalf of the General Assembly and on my own behalf and wish him well in the important and onerous responsibilities that he has just assumed.

In accordance with the practice of special sessions, I also propose that the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee shall be a member of the General Committee of the nineteenth special session.

If I hear no objection, it shall be so decided.

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly has now been fully constituted.

We turn now to matters concerning the participation of observers in the work of the special session.

Members will recall that the General Assembly, in paragraph 4 of resolution 51/181 of 16 December 1996, decided to invite States members of the specialized agencies which are not members of the United Nations to participate in the work of the nineteenth special session in the capacity of observers, namely the Cook Islands, the Holy See, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Switzerland, Tonga and Tuvalu.

Accordingly, I should to inform members that those States were invited to participate as observers in the debate in plenary meeting.

Next, I should like to propose that intergovernmental and other organizations and entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the work of the General Assembly be invited to participate in the debate in plenary meeting. May I take it that the Assembly adopts this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to propose that the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole also hear statements by observers. May I take that the General Assembly approves this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: I should now like to propose that representatives of United Nations programmes and specialized agencies be invited to participate in the debate in plenary meeting, provided they are at the highest level. May I take it that the General Assembly approves this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: Additionally, I should like to propose that the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole also hear statements by representatives of United Nations programmes and specialized agencies. May I take it that the General Assembly approves this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly decision 51/467 of 18 April 1997, and without setting a precedent for other special sessions of the Assembly, I have extended invitations to representatives

of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 and represented by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and on the roster, to participate in the debate in plenary meeting.

Also in accordance with General Assembly decision 51/467 of 18 April 1997, representatives of such major groups who could not be accommodated in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 in plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session may be invited to address the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

I should like to inform members that the Inter-Parliamentary Union has requested to make a statement in the debate in plenary meeting at this special session.

In this connection, I have undertaken consultations with the regional groups. It is my understanding that there is no objection to the request by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

May I therefore take it that the Assembly, without setting a precedent, agrees to hear a statement by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the debate in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: With regard to the list of speakers in the debate in plenary meeting, I should like to remind representatives that, owing to time constraints, the list of speakers was established on the understanding that the length of statements would not exceed seven minutes.

In connection with the seven-minute limit, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum, which functions as follows: a green light will be activated at the start of the speaker's statement, an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of the seven minutes, and a red light will be activated when the seven-minute limit has elapsed.

I should like to appeal to participants in the debate in plenary meeting to cooperate in limiting their statements to seven minutes so that all those inscribed on the list of speakers for a given meeting will be heard at that meeting.

In view of the large number of representatives already inscribed on the list of speakers, I should like to inform members that I intend to start the plenary meetings punctually at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

In this connection, I should like to assure the Assembly that I shall be in the Chair punctually at the scheduled time. I sincerely hope that all delegations will make a special effort to cooperate in this regard.

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda (A/S-19/1)

The President: In order to expedite our work, the Assembly may wish to consider the provisional agenda in plenary meeting without referring it to the General Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to this procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it then that the Assembly wishes to adopt the provisional agenda as it appears in document A/S-19/1?

The agenda was adopted.

The President: Regarding the allocation of items, I should like to propose that agenda item 8, entitled "Overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21", be allocated to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the nineteenth special session for consideration, on the understanding that the debate on the item shall take place in plenary meeting.

May I take it the Assembly wishes to adopt this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: In connection with agenda item 8, I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/S-19/19, which contains a list of documents before the Assembly for its consideration at the nineteenth special session. In accordance with the decision just taken, this list is referred to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole for its consideration.

May I also take it that, bearing in mind the practice of the General Assembly, it is the wish of the Assembly to consider agenda item 9 directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8

Overall review and appraisal of implementation of Agenda 21

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Cardoso *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation):* Brazil comes to this special session of the General Assembly to state its willingness to remain at the forefront of the process that led to one of the most meaningful moments in international understanding.

Rio in 1992 paved the way for a new global partnership and economic growth based on social justice and the sustainable use of natural resources. This international accord, based on the ethics of shared responsibility and cooperation, is none other than the "spirit of Rio", the most important legacy of the Conference, which we must strive to rekindle.

The five years that have elapsed since the Rio Conference have clearly shown that changes in the global, political and economic structure have not been followed through by commensurate progress in the war on poverty and against the predatory use of natural resources.

In order to advance this agenda, more will have to be done that merely looking complacently to the past. We must once again uphold sustainable development as a priority in international relations, not to accuse, not to intervene, not for hegemony or power, but to cooperate. We must correct the imbalance that has emerged between the advances in the agenda of political and economic freedom on the one hand and that of sustainable development on the other.

Environmental awareness is now an inseparable dimension of citizenship. Protection of the environment has been fully incorporated into the domestic political agenda of countries. The Rio + 5 conference held this past March was an eloquent example of the positive action of the non-governmental organizations on environmental issues. It gave renewed thrust to the debate on sustainable development and marked a resurgence of environmental awareness.

In order to create a focal point for international public opinion with regard to sustainable development, Brazil is prepared to host, in Rio de Janeiro, a Rio forum on environment and development. This is one way to keep the "spirit of Rio" alive, making our city of Rio the international capital of sustainable development.

At this session, we must identify, objectively and judiciously, the areas in which no progress has been made and come to terms with the fact that today's challenges are even greater than those of five years ago. We have moved forward in the consideration of critical issues such as climate change, biodiversity, forests and desertification. Progress, however, has been hindered by a lack of effective means of implementation and financing. In some cases, we have yet to overcome the stalemate in negotiations. Brazil has submitted concrete proposals regarding climate, biodiversity and forests.

Poverty and environmental degradation, particularly in urban areas, continue to affect the living standards of hundreds of millions of people all over the world. There is an urban environmental agenda as important as the so-called green agenda.

We must expand awareness of the importance of protecting the oceans, which are the basis of life itself. In this connection, we must stimulate initiatives such as the independent World Commission on the Oceans, headed by the former President of Portugal, Mario Soares. Water has already become one of the most pressing issues on the agenda for the next century.

Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption still abound.

Lack of consistency in honouring commitments to international cooperation undermines the spirit of the partnership forged at Rio de Janeiro. It has become easier to blame and to accuse than to act. The environment is now used as a pretext for protectionist practices that undermine the foundations of an open and non-discriminatory international economic system. We must regain the balance achieved at Rio. We must not sacrifice sustainable development for the sake of illusory economic efficiency.

Brazil, a country endowed with environmental assets that rank among the planet's largest and most diversified, is firmly committed to the vision of the future designed at Rio de Janeiro. Our Constitution enshrines the basic concepts of sustainable development. In addition to our

National Agenda 21, we are in the process of developing regional and local agendas that reflect the challenge posed by the continental proportions of our territory. We have modern environmental legislation, which we continue to complement and enhance. We have emphasized the coordination of economic and environmental policies. An example is our Green Protocol, designed to dovetail financing resources with environmental protection.

We have sought the participation of civil society in environmental management and we have decentralized resources and action. We have set aside 5.22 per cent of Brazil's territory, the equivalent of 446,000 square kilometres, for national parks and ecological sanctuaries: remarkable figures by any standard. The new integrated national policy for the Amazon aims at redirecting economic growth and fostering the development of the Amazonian people. The pilot programme for the protection of the tropical forests of Brazil is at present one of the most noteworthy examples of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Within the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), we are in the process of completing a unified legal instrument on the environment. We have considerable experience in many areas of interest to environmental preservation, and we are ready to make this available to our partners.

This is why Brazil joined in an initiative with Germany, Singapore and South Africa to contribute to the common effort to define priorities for action in the future. We want to set an example of how countries in differing stages of development can demonstrate, through creativity and concerted action, the political will to render Agenda 21 a concrete reality.

The challenges we must face to reach this goal are manifold: renewing our efforts in the war on poverty; broadening the environmental agenda to include the urban environment; strengthening the structure of the United Nations in the area of environment, making it more efficient; promoting the constructive participation of non-governmental organizations in the social debate, engaging the working and business sectors; promoting action by like-minded countries without necessarily awaiting or expecting full consensus before taking action; recognizing that the commitments made in 1992 require a substantial flow of new and additional resources, as well as the transfer of environmentally sound technology; and giving priority to basic education, and in particular to environmental education, as an inherent manifestation of citizenship and as a mainstay of sustainable development.

Then, and only then, will we be able to rekindle the spirit of Rio. Let us do it together, in cooperation and in peace.

The President: I thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for his statement.

Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Mugabe: I wish to begin by welcoming the convening of this special session of the General Assembly, the very first such gathering since the Rio Summit and the adoption of Agenda 21 in 1992. This session has brought together Heads of State and Government to review and appraise progress made so far in the implementation of Agenda 21.

In Africa, the social and economic situation, compared to that of other developing countries, does not justify much boasting. On the contrary, frustration, despair and disillusionment continue to plague African countries. For a variety of reasons, Africa, the most economically backward region of the world, is in the midst of a profound economic and social crisis.

The global picture shows that gross domestic product growth rates have indeed been positive for developing countries generally, averaging 5.3 per cent per annum from 1992 to 1996. But for Africa south of the Sahara, and to some extent Eastern Europe, the rates were much lower and often not able to exceed population growth rates. Zimbabwe is not an exception in this regard, despite the positive measures that the Zimbabwe Government has taken.

The soaring levels of unemployment, the fast-deteriorating standards of living and the ever-deepening cycle of poverty have all contributed to greater degradation of the environment, particularly the further depletion of forests and the pollution worldwide of land,

air and water. Africa alone is estimated to suffer from deforestation at the rate of 3.6 million hectares per year. Its share of future carbon dioxide emissions is projected to rise to between 12 and 16 per cent of the global total by the year 2001.

The general trend for the whole world, whether we consider countries or individuals, has been for the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer. The alleviation of hunger and poverty has not shown any remarkable progress anywhere. The gap has widened and will continue to do so. Rich, developed countries continue to be magnets for infusions of capital and potential investors. The poor developing countries have become even more dependent on aid, whatever there is of it available. It is estimated in this regard that since 1992 as many as 1.5 billion people have become poorer, and these live in developing rather than developed countries.

Recent statistics on world population growth have indicated that the human race will by the turn of the century total 5.6 billion. Because of population pressure on land, 3.3 billion hectares of productive land are set to be a worthless desert by the year 2000. These statistics provide a sombre picture of a globe which our future generations might find uninhabitable because of our present-day irresponsible and myopic activities.

It is also clear that there has been no fundamental departure from past trends in the consumption of energy. Fossil fuels — oil, gas, coal — have continued to be the basic sources of energy. Renewable energy sources have not received the attention they deserve. In recognition of the importance of the use of renewable sources of energy, Zimbabwe hosted the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Solar Summit at which the Heads of State and Government who were present adopted the World Solar Programme 1996-2005.

Energy has emerged as one of the priority issues since Rio. I must add that the energy crisis impacts not only urban areas but rural areas and communities as well. It is strongly believed that the use of solar energy could be an answer to clean and infinite energy; hence the urgent call for the funding of investment and research in affordable renewable energy, particularly solar energy.

The Rio Summit called upon Governments to make money available to implement Agenda 21 within their own countries. As current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, allow me to mention a number of issues of importance to Africa which this special session must consider. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has clearly pointed to the negative effects of globalization trends that characterize the situation of African countries. The CSD report notes that most countries have shown slow or even negative growth and continue to be marginalized. These trends can be reversed only through international cooperation.

We in Africa, despite our meagre resources and other limitations, have gone a long way towards trying to meet our side of the bargain. As the problems confronting developing countries and Africa are both manifold and complex, their solutions require the concerted efforts of the international community. The United Nations system offers the best forum for constructive international dialogue and cooperation on social and economic development.

I therefore call upon this session to take heed of the call by the Pan-African Conference of the African Ministers of Environment held in March this year in Burkina Faso. In their Ouagadougou Declaration, the Ministers exhorted the international community to assist in the process of elaborating a regional action programme for Africa. Such an action programme on the environment and sustainable development could tackle the most pressing issues of environmental degradation.

The international community seems to remember the existence of Africa only when disaster strikes the continent. Yet in Africa, as in other developing regions, poverty is the single most serious contributor to environmental degradation associated with land abuse, deforestation and the lack of access to fresh water.

If financial resources were forthcoming, Africa would refrain from killing wild animals for food, cutting down trees for energy and polluting water resources for lack of appropriate technologies. I wish therefore to urge developed countries to honour their commitments made at Rio and at the various United Nations forums since then. In this regard, the agreed United Nations target of committing 0.7 per cent and 0.15 per cent of gross national product to developing and least developed countries, respectively, would go a long way in assisting these countries to achieve sustainable development.

This session should also address the disturbing phenomenon of de-industrialization that is now manifesting itself in a number of countries. There can be no sustainable development without industrialization.

Developing countries, particularly those in Africa, continue to be marginalized as they are subjected to the relentless and, in some way, irreversible twin processes of globalization and liberalization. This special session should mandate the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to undertake a comprehensive empirical study and report back on the implications and consequences of globalization and liberalization for sustainable development.

In some of our countries, indigenous entrepreneurs are being choked out of the industrial arena at a time when Governments are giving way to private enterprise. Transnational corporations are the major actors and are, unfortunately, depleting natural resources and polluting the environment in the process of globalization and liberalization. The World Trade Organization has assisted transnational corporations with global economic opportunities but has not inculcated in them responsibilities for the environment, as we are witnessing cut-throat competition and corporate avarice undermining the whole process of sustainable development.

There can be no preservation of the environment amidst the massive and pandemic prevalence of poverty, ignorance and disease, and these cannot be eradicated in the absence of sustainable development. This organic link between the environment and development is what has been woefully ignored since the Earth Summit in Rio. We observe in the annex to the note by the Secretary-General that it is the collective view of the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system participating in the Administrative Committee on Coordination that

> "The expectations of additional resources raised at Rio have not been fulfilled." *(A/S-19/6, para. 11)*

The Global Environment Facility has been a woeful failure. If this is seen against the backdrop of the unprecedented financial crisis that now bedevils the entire United Nations system, one cannot but begin to question whether there is still any genuine commitment to multilateralism. As a signatory to Agenda 21, Zimbabwe has incorporated the Rio goals into ecological, cultural, gender and economic development programmes. We fully acknowledge that national Governments shoulder the primary responsibility for the implementation of Agenda 21 in their territories.

What we have witnessed in the five years after Rio has been a nearly complete halt to international dialogue on environment and sustainable development. This is a severe setback to our efforts at forging and strengthening multilateralism. The spirit and the outcome of this special session of the United Nations General Assembly should spur us to translate into concrete reality the vigour and seriousness which characterized the Earth Summit in Rio.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for his statement.

Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Hashimoto (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text furnished by the delegation*): I would like to express my profound gratitude for having been given this opportunity to present my views today.

At the Earth Summit five years ago, the international community initiated a grand effort to protect our beautiful planet Earth and permanently ensure prosperous and peaceful lives for all humankind. Regrettably, however, despite the enormous efforts of the international community since then, the global environment remains gripped by many problems. If the situation remains as it is, it may be difficult to pass on this irreplaceable Earth to the twenty-first century. Now let us renew our determination and seriously consider concrete measures to promote sustainable development, a goal upon which we agreed at Rio de Janeiro.

Immediately before coming here, I renewed my determination, together with the other leaders at the Summit of the Eight held in Denver, to preserve the global environment. I would like to stress two points: our responsibility to future generations and global human security. Bearing these points in mind, it is necessary that each of us develop a strong consciousness and shoulder our responsibilities. We must change our lifestyles. Moreover, it is necessary to develop innovative environmental technologies and to promote their transfer to developing countries in order to foster sustainable development.

In the light of the need today for a global effort to tackle environmental issues, the United Nations is assuming ever greater importance. Let us renew our pledge to cooperate with the United Nations.

Among our many environmental problems, global climate change stands out as a serious issue that directly affects not only the lives of people today but also the future existence of the human race. The third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be convened in our ancient capital of Kyoto in December. We must spare no effort to ensure a successful conclusion of the Conference. The eight countries at the Denver Summit agreed that they intend to commit to meaningful, realistic and equitable targets that will result in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2010. This is a message addressed to this special session as well. Let us also demonstrate at this special session, as the general will of the United Nations, our firm commitment to the success of the Kyoto Conference. I assure the Assembly that Japan is resolved to do its utmost in this regard, and I sincerely appeal to all the countries gathered here to extend their cooperation to the Kyoto Conference.

It goes without saying that we must also strive, from a medium- and long-term perspective, to solve the issue of global climate change. For example, if we want to stabilize the density of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere at a level about twice as high as it was before the industrial revolution, it will be necessary to reduce global per capita carbon dioxide emissions to one ton by the year 2100. This is a great challenge that cannot be met with existing technology, and it will be necessary for the whole world to unite in order to achieve this objective. For this purpose and in order to accelerate, with international cooperation, efforts to prevent global warming, I would like to propose an initiative to be called the "comprehensive strategy for the prevention of global warming", or "green initiative". It will consist of two pillars: "green technology" and "green aid". Under green technology, we would promote the efforts of developed countries in the development and dissemination of energy conservation technologies; the introduction of non-fossil energy sources, such as photovoltaic power generation; the development of innovative energy and environmental technologies; and worldwide afforestation and forest preservation. Under green aid, we would utilize official development assistance and private financial resources to cope with the issues of energy and global warming and promote cooperation with developing countries through the development of human resources.

I appeal to like-minded countries for their participation and cooperation.

In the past, Japan had a very serious pollution problem, and on reflection, it has successfully strengthened its environmental policies in a fundamental way. Also, since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Japan has enacted its Basic Environmental Law and established its Basic Environmental Plan, thereby making its new environmental policies clear. At the winter Olympic Games, which will be held in Nagano next year, every possible consideration will be given to the preservation of the environment. And we have declared "Preserve and Nurture the Natural Environment" as the theme of the Aichi Expo, which will be held in the year 2005. Japan is prepared to present not only its successes but also its failures, and to cooperate with others so that its mistakes will not be repeated.

Official development assistance plays an important role in promoting sustainable development in developing countries. Japan's official development assistance adheres to the principle that environmental conservation and development should be pursued in tandem. Japan reached the ambitious target it set for itself at the Earth Summit, and actually exceeded the targeted amount of official development assistance in the environmental field by more than 40 per cent, providing ¥1.44 trillion — approximately $13.3 billion — in assistance over the five-year period.

Although my Government is now facing severe budgetary constraints, it will give the greatest possible consideration to official development assistance in the area of the environment. As a second initiative, I would like to announce that we shall promote for developing countries a new plan entitled Initiatives for Sustainable Development towards the Twenty-first Century (ISD). The plan of action under the Initiatives is as follows.

First, with regard to air and water pollution measures, Japan will promote the establishment of an acid deposition monitoring network in East Asia. By utilizing the environmental centres to the establishment of which it has contributed, Japan will, for example, enhance the monitoring capacity of individual countries and also work to establish an information network on pollution. Moreover, it will further promote the transfer of environmental technologies for the prevention of pollution.

Secondly, on the issue of global warming, Japan will promote the transfer to developing countries of technologies related to the conservation of energy and new energy sources, including transfers under the scheme of green aid, to which I referred a moment ago.

Thirdly, with regard to water issues, Japan will further promote the creation of water and sewage systems and will continue to work to prevent the health problems and the harmful effects on the environments in which people live that are caused by water pollution.

The fourth issue is the preservation of the natural environment, and the issue of forests is especially important. We will promote cooperation for efforts to afforest wide areas. In the area of the preservation of biodiversity, we will promote efforts mainly through the Biodiversity Centre in Indonesia, which was established through the cooperative efforts of Indonesia, the United States and Japan. With regard to the preservation of coral reefs, we will establish a research centre on coral reef preservation in Asia and the Pacific which may be expected to play a central role in creating a network for research cooperation.

Last, but no less important, is the promotion of environmental education. We believe that heightening the environmental awareness of all people through environmental education is fundamental to the creation of an environmentally sound world. We intend to cooperate in promoting worldwide environmental study programmes and to support cooperation in international research by establishing an institute of global environmental strategies, which will engage in strategic research and study means of policy development, among other tasks.

From the depths of post-war devastation and despair, Japan has achieved rapid economic growth since the end of the Second World War and has experienced severe pollution problems in the process. There is perhaps no other country that can share both the suffering of a developing country and the concerns of a developed country to the extent that Japan can. This is why Japan makes it a national policy to cooperate in the promotion of sustainable development. I pledge that I shall make every effort to ensure that this beautiful planet Earth is passed on to the twenty-first century. Now let us launch the partnership for global environmental preservation and development.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of Japan for his statement.

Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Mkapa: In 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, world leaders and many non-governmental organizations discussed the global environment and development. They set lofty objectives and undertook solemn commitments to enhance sustainable economic and social development and to protect the environment on which such development depends. Agenda 21 was a universal commitment to an unprecedented and necessary global partnership to ensure the future welfare of humanity and the survival of its civilization.

Today we must make an honest review of the distance we have travelled individually and collectively towards that goal and see whether we can recharge that Rio spirit of global partnership. Has Agenda 21 received the national and international political support it so much deserves and needs if it is to succeed? The stakes are palpable, and the actors have been identified and the modalities agreed upon. To try to renegotiate those noble commitments freely undertaken in 1992 would be to backtrack on the Rio global consensus and would slow down the momentum already achieved, which, if lost, might never be recaptured.

We knew and accepted that there would be no painless adjustments and solutions, and that to succeed we needed global partnership. The consequences of environmental degradation and pollution respect no borders. They affect equally the polluters and those who do not pollute, the rich and the poor — hence, the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Notable progress has been achieved, especially by developing countries, in the implementation of Agenda 21. International environmental conventions, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification have been concluded and are now in force. But these and other successes remain modest by

ndards we had in mind in 1992, and we still have to w they will be implemented.

t Rio, for example, we agreed on the United Nations of developed countries contributing 0.7 per cent of ross national product towards official development nce. That contribution has in fact declined since Rio, n average of O.34 per cent in 1992 to 0.25 per cent On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I should thank the four countries of the Organization for mic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that have d this United Nations target.

he capacity of developing countries to implement a 21 depends critically on increased flows of net l development assistance to them. Each decline in l development assistance therefore erodes the y of developing countries to implement the Rio ents and action plan. That is why environmental ation, which could easily have been prevented, has ed. Poverty has worsened in some areas, and income lity within and between nations has widened.

he Global Environmental Facility (GEF) capital also to be increased substantially to enable it to provide te finance for the programmes that are within its te, as well as for new areas which do not yet have g mechanisms of their own, such as the Convention ertification and drought.

Many developing countries accept that private nent and trade are more secure and dignified tions for sustainable growth and development. We noted substantial increases in net foreign direct nent to developing countries and recent developments up of Seven policy to promote trade and investment ica. But we must not forget that first, the focus of n direct investment is always on projects that yield returns, and not necessarily on those that are tible with the Rio goals of sustainable development. lly, least developed countries still do not have that of human resource capacity and infrastructural pment necessary to attract foreign direct investment. nake far-reaching political and economic reforms and ue to improve their investment and regulatory s. But a lot of investments are required to build the ary financial and human capacity, to build the ary infrastructure, and to create larger integrated ts. Such investments will continue to need and l primarily on official development assistance g, not on foreign direct investment.

Africa's external debt is unsustainable and a major drag on initiatives for growth, development and environmental conservation. Debt service is gobbling up over 30 per cent of Africa's export revenues, 25 per cent of our savings and over 4 per cent of our gross domestic product. Such a burden is clearly unmanageable. Multilateral debt, which in Africa accounts for nearly half of the total debt service, is a major area of concern. We appreciate recent initiatives for debt relief, but when criteria for eligibility are too stringent, or if the promised relief is to be realized in the too-distant future, the medicine may arrive when the patient is beyond help.

In Rio we recognized that technology transfer is essential if developing countries are to make the transition to sustainable development. We need, therefore, to arrive at internationally agreed modalities on how to transfer technology from developed to developing countries on a predictable and sustainable basis. This cannot be achieved through market forces or the private sector alone. It is necessary to have publicly funded technology projects, including the establishment of regional technology centres, to encourage development and transfer of technology, on concessional terms. Developed countries should give practical support to such programmes, and conditions for the transfer of technology, particularly of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries, should be relaxed.

We have all sought to address environmental degradation caused by unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in the developed countries.

The World Solar Summit took place in Harare in September last year, and on that occasion the importance of developing solar energy as a clean and renewable source of energy was underlined. Many developing countries have come up with solar energy projects that could be very useful in that regard. They are projects that deserve and require active and practical support from the developed countries.

This special session should mark the beginning of a renewed spirit of global and practical partnership for sustainable development and poverty reduction measures through increased official development assistance and foreign direct investment, for financing capacity-building, and for preferential and unrestricted access to the markets of developed countries. We should leave here with clear targets and goals, with set time frames and identified

means for their achievement, taking into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

This is the kind of global and practical partnership to which the Group of 77 and China commit themselves for the common good of future generations.

The President: I thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for his statement.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Wim Kok, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Wim Kok, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Kok (Netherlands): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia align themselves with this statement.

This special session of the General Assembly offers us a welcome opportunity, first, to take stock of the progress we have made since the Rio Summit of 1992 and, secondly, to set out policy lines for the coming years. We have to aim for worldwide sustainable development. This is achievable only if we choose coherent and well-coordinated environmental, economic and social policies. We need a sustainable balance between environmental protection and economic growth. Development is sustainable only if we eradicate poverty, promote employment, foster social integration, implement democratic governance, promote gender equality and respect all human rights.

Our search for sustainable development implies a change in patterns of production and consumption. Within Europe we will discourage the inefficient use of scarce raw materials and energy. Prices should reflect environmental costs. We want economic growth which puts less and less pressure on the environment. Since Rio we have gradually worked in this direction. We now realize that we have to intensify our efforts. Changes in consumption are just as necessary. Conspicuous and wasteful consumption by the affluent is a strain on resources and an injustice to the poor; it is detrimental to public health and well-being.

The environment is a priority issue worldwide, both in public life and in the private sector. We are in danger of passing thresholds beyond which serious damage will occur, some of it irreversible. And even if part of the damage is reparable, it would be at an unnecessarily or even unaffordably high price. To safeguard future generations from this danger and burden, it is our duty to act now.

Climate change is a global problem. The industrialized world should take the lead in reducing its emissions of greenhouse gasses. The developed countries should conclude a legally binding commitment in Kyoto. The European Union has agreed to a phased reduction of the emissions of greenhouse gasses of, on average, 15 per cent below the 1990 level by the year 2010. Mandatory and recommended policies and measures, including harmonized ones, must ensure that this target is achieved.

In many places around the globe, we are running up against the limits of the availability of fresh water. It is necessary to put awareness of the impending water crises higher up the international agenda. A more integrated approach must be ensured so that water and land management are looked at together. Priority should be given to safe drinking water, sufficient water of good quality for other purposes and the integrated management of watersheds.

Deforestation is continuing at a rate of over 11 million hectares per year. In Rio, our countries adopted the Forest Principles. Now is the time to go one step further and start the negotiating process for a global convention on forests, which should be open for signature in the year 2000. We are ready to continue to provide substantial financial support to this purpose.

Desertification torments many parts of the world, notably in Africa. The European Union calls on the international community to support the global mechanism to implement the Convention. We are already devoting considerable resources to this end and are ready to do more, preferably together with other donors.

Various problems continue to hinder the promotion of one of the major aims of Agenda 21: technology transfer from the rich to the poor. We are ready to

engage ourselves to promote technology transfer in a multilateral framework.

Recently, the European Union launched three initiatives. First, there must be an efficient and equitable distribution of water resources and their integrated, sustainable management. Secondly, concerted action is required to provide for coordinated, sustainable energy policies. Thirdly, studies have indicated that, 50 years from now, the world will need a tenfold increase in eco-efficiency. Economic development without vastly improved efficiency in the use of natural resources and energy will gradually but inevitably come to a complete standstill. The European Union has proposed to study the feasibility of a fourfold increase in eco-efficiency, which should be achieved within two to three decades.

No matter how important development assistance may be, it should never be seen as a substitute for the mobilization of domestic resources and foreign investment. Foreign direct investment to developing nations has multiplied sixfold during the nineties, but it still reaches too few recipient countries. We have to make sure that investments are directed in such a way that they directly or indirectly contribute to the fulfilment of sustainable development targets.

The European Union reconfirms the commitments it undertook in Rio de Janeiro. We commit ourselves again to providing the substantial new and additional concessional financial resources necessary for the early and progressive implementation of Agenda 21.

The European Union member States will do their best at least to stop the downward trend in development assistance and will do their utmost to reverse this trend, so that more countries will reach the 0.7 per cent target of official development assistance. We commit ourselves to providing resources for Africa as well as for the poorest countries elsewhere. Since Rio, quite a few initiatives have been taken to implement programmes for sustainable development in specific areas. We will work together with other countries to implement these programmes and will make adequate resources available to this end. However, the European Union, as a big donor, insists on a fair burden-sharing, both with traditional donors and with new countries in a position to do so.

With respect to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the European Union is ready to reconfirm the existing mandate and to commit itself to a solid strengthening of the Facility, amongst other things, by a solid replenishment.

In less than three years, we will enter a new millennium. Let us make sure that we make a contribution towards a truly sustainable development on the threshold of that era.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for his statement.

Mr. Wim Kok, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Aznar (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Undoubtedly, we are living through times of individual and social challenges that make it necessary for us to find innovative solutions, both nationally and internationally. Now, as we approach a new century for which there is no charted route nor precise map to follow, we must seek solutions to current and future problems.

We have witnessed spectacular changes in the sphere of technology and economic globalization that have deeply transformed the world as we knew it. And, amidst such great progress, we have seen that nature, which in the past was considered to be resilient and inexhaustible, is in fact vulnerable and limited.

The results of Rio are written proof of the awareness of mankind that it is only through the conservation of the environment that can we aspire to a decent life. They reflect the moral obligation to bequeath to our descendants a world that they can live in, a duty to avoid the ethical gap between the traditional Western systems and the emergence of new technologies to which Hans Jonas made reference.

The environment is a common heritage of mankind of which we are the custodians, not the capricious owners. We have no right to waste resources of which we would be unjustly depriving our children. The very

fact that we are not satisfied with the progress made since Rio and our resolve to improve its results confirm the value that we attach to that ethical framework accepted by us all.

We must overcome the obstacles encountered in the practical implementation of the concept of sustainable development. We therefore fully endorse the goals set forth by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. The programme to be developed is extensive and there are two priorities: the eradication of poverty and changing production and consumption habits.

Poverty offends any apparent progress of a society, because it implies the loss of human capabilities and is accompanied by deficiencies in nutrition, education, health and access to productive resources. In addition, we must undertake a new technological revolution that enables us to produce better by using fewer resources and less energy. Responsible consumption must be part and parcel of social awareness in developed and developing countries alike, because even if we have different circumstances, our problems are common to all and there is only one nature. Our use of scarce natural resources must therefore be efficient.

The idea of sustainability must be integrated into every national society through economically viable and socially acceptable reforms, with changes that promote the role of civil society and the work of citizens in a democratic framework. Respect for human rights is a precondition for development, as are governability, equality and respect for the heritage of indigenous peoples concerning traditional knowledge and sustainable practices.

Together we must create a favourable international economic environment and a suitable trade policy within the World Trade Organization (WTO). The international financial institutions are increasingly including this in their programmes, and the developed countries must make an additional effort to satisfactorily replenish existing funds.

But we must also attract other actors. The participation of the private sector is fundamental, as it has and receives a large part of the new technologies. Direct foreign investment is a powerful tool for change. This requires a flexible multilateral framework and, in the receiving countries, an adequate body of law and the mobilization of internal resources. Development cooperation is an effective supplementary tool to the former.

To achieve these goals and to encourage individual responsibility towards our common environment, educating young people and society in general is our best possible tool. Protection of the environment must be a clear priority in our educational policies.

I represent a country that has carried out a fast-paced modernization process and that is also aware of the dilemmas inherent in development and of the assaults upon the environment. I come from a land of fragile ecosystems on the shores of a threatened sea, and I belong to a people that throughout its history has looked up to the sky in search of the drought-relieving rains.

The Mediterranean basin is a clear example of a shared natural resource, the preservation of which is necessary to us all. We share with other European and African countries the problems of desertification, drought, erosion, loss of plant cover and the non-sustainable use of soil. That is why we urge the promotion of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the implementation of Annex IV on the Mediterranean. Likewise, forests are essential for life and biodiversity, which is why we must reach an agreement to draft a convention on the protection of forests. Because of our Mediterranean identity, the promotion of sustainable tourism is also a priority for us, as is the proper management of water availability and water demand.

The values we apply in our country are the same as the values embodied in our official development assistance. We have specific technologies adapted to the use of scarce resources and very diverse ecosystems, and we are ready to share our knowledge and expertise. That is why 35 per cent of our bilateral non-refundable aid is devoted to programmes with an environmental component.

The araucaria is an American tree that can reach a height of up to 50 metres. Its leaves are always green, and it covers large expanses of forest on this continent. We have given the name Araucaria Project to a plan that will protect five geographical areas of rich biodiversity, highly representative of the major American ecosystems. In its implementation and follow-up we will work together with Ibero-American civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. I sincerely believe that this programme, and the many other conservation programmes through the world, represent the surest guarantee of our common future.

The President: I thank the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for his statement.

Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by The Right Honourable Tony Blair, M.P., Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Right Honourable Tony Blair, M.P., Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Blair (United Kingdom): May I begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of this special session.

This is my fifth international meeting in eight weeks in office. My three young children in London say that I am not enough at home. But I know that this is one summit they would really want me to be at, because they know that the decisions here will have a profound effect on the world that they inherit. So I speak to you not just as the new British Prime Minister, but as a father.

Three principles should guide us as we strive to protect the environment for future generations.

First, we must give everyone a stake in the world's environment. That is why the fall in aid flows since 1992 is so worrying; why my Government supports the United Nations aid target; and why we are committed to improving further the quality of our assistance, reversing the decline in Britain's development assistance, and refocusing our efforts on combating poverty. We shall give priority to the poorest countries, including in Africa.

At the Denver summit, I committed the United Kingdom to raising by 50 per cent our bilateral support for health, education and water projects in Africa, and we believe in the objective of halving abject poverty in the world by the year 2015.

Reducing poverty is in our own interests. The poverty of landless and desperate people causes most of the destruction of the rainforests. And it is the reduction of the rainforest, the lungs of the world, that threatens the stability of our own climate.

I hope this week we will agree to start negotiations on a forest convention. It takes less than an hour to fell a tree, but it can take a lifetime to replace it. If we are serious about sustainable development, we must show that we are serious about sustainable forestry management.

Britain has long experience of the public and private management of forests. We are keen to share that experience. Today, I can announce that we intend to adopt a new forest standard to provide a benchmark for the regeneration of our forests. It may help provide a model for other countries. So I can announce that Britain will be increasing our development assistance for forestry management to countries wanting to share our expertise.

There is a liquid more precious than oil — water. Yet while some countries expect running water on tap, too many people in the same world get through the day on what they can carry back from the morning trip to the well. Britain will play its part in developing an action plan to ensure universal access to clean water and sanitation. I hope progress this week will lead to real results at next year's Commission on Sustainable Development.

Five years ago, the Rio Summit launched Agenda 21. Since then, in Britain 70 per cent of our local authorities have been inspired to "think globally, act locally" through Local Agenda 21. But we must do more. I want all local authorities in the United Kingdom to adopt Local Agenda 21 strategies by the year 2000.

Perhaps the most worrying problem is climate change. If greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise unabated, by the year 2100 global temperatures will have gone up by 1 to 3.5 degrees centigrade, and sea levels risen by perhaps as much as a metre. Some small islands are seriously at risk. So the European Union has proposed the new and challenging target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in developed countries to 15 per cent below their 1990 level by the year 2010. In Britain we would be ready to go further, to a 20 per cent target. This target will require significant measures: more efficient use of transport, improved energy conservation, and greater use of renewable sources of energy.

Many of you were at Rio. It was an exciting event. Environmental issues dominated politics and the media. Challenges were laid down, targets set.

I attacked the last British Government for many things. But it did deliver on the greenhouse gas emission target set at Rio.

Some other countries cannot say the same, including some of the great industrialized nations. I say that our targets will not be taken seriously by the poorer countries until we, the richer countries, are meeting them.

To be really effective, we must act globally. At Kyoto, industrialized countries must agree upon legally binding targets for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions during the first decade of the next century. The biggest responsibility falls on those countries with the biggest emissions. We in Europe have now put our cards on the table. It is time for the special pleading to stop and for others to follow suit. If we fail at Kyoto, we fail our children, because the consequences will be felt in their lifetime. And we must all deliver on the commitments that we make. Setting new targets means little if old ones are ignored.

At the same time, industrialized countries must work with developing countries to help them combat climate change, biodiversity loss and other global environmental challenges. We must live up to our side of the bargain and ensure that they have the resources to do this. So the United Kingdom supports the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility. And we propose to enhance the United Kingdom's partnership with key developing countries in energy efficiency and climate change research and observation.

We are all in this together. No country can opt out of global warming or fence in its own private climate. We need common action to save our common environment. The Earth is the only planet in the solar system with an environment that can sustain life. Our solemn duty as leaders of the world is to treasure that precious heritage and to hand on to our children and grandchildren an environment that will enable them to enjoy the same full life that we took for granted. And indeed young people themselves have an important part to play in all of this.

Like other nations, Britain is now preparing to mark the coming millennium. But the millennium project on which we must all work is to rescue the global environment so that it can nurture life in all our countries for another thousand years and more. Let us show this week that we have the vision to rise to the task and the commitment to see it through.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for his statement.

The Right Honourable Tony Blair, M. P., Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I give the floor now to His Excellency Mr. Helmut Kohl, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Helmut Kohl, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Kohl (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text furnished by the delegation*): At the outset, let me, on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany, express our full support for the statement made earlier by the President of the European Union, Mr. Wim Kok.

At the close of the century, mankind has epochal opportunities which we would not have deemed possible even a short time ago. The end of the East-West conflict has brought us significantly closer to world peace. At the same time there is an increasing awareness worldwide that the preservation of Creation is just as much a task for the international community as the safeguarding of peace.

The 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development showed the way towards a twenty-first-century global environment partnership. Since then, much has been achieved but unfortunately it is also true that the main trends of global pollution have still not been reversed. The crucial question for our generation is how we can permanently safeguard the natural basis of life for a growing world population. In view of the shrinking reserves of potable water, possible unpredictable climate changes and the spread of deserts, this question becomes all the more urgent. We have no more time to lose.

If we fail to take up this challenge now, conflicts over natural resources will become ever more likely. Even today, millions of people all over the world are forced to leave their homes because of the destruction of the natural basis for their existence.

However, there are also developments that give us cause for hope. We now possess, if we did but wish to use them, the knowledge and the means durably to protect man's natural sources of life for the future. The

message of Rio 1992 remains valid: to regard environmental and development issues as two sides of the same coin and, finally, to act accordingly. More and more people searching for food, energy and housing are depleting natural resources faster than they can be replaced. For this reason too we must combat poverty in the developing world more vigorously than we have done in the past.

The industrial countries must still play their part by providing economic aid and modern technology. But this means in turn that the developing nations themselves must do what they can to create the conditions for healthy development. The industrial and threshold countries must make sure that their own economic growth does not also mean an increase in pollution.

Here at this session in New York, five years after Rio, we must set the course towards substantial progress. I see the following principal areas of action both as a necessity and as an opportunity to take a major step forward.

First, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held at Berlin in April 1995, laid the foundation for a global climate protection agreement. This special session of the General Assembly should ask the conference to be held at Kyoto at the end of this year to formulate an international agreement to reduce markedly the emission of greenhouse gases. The industrial countries should adopt the agreed position and goal of the European Union to cut the levels of the main greenhouse gases by 15 per cent by the year 2010.

Secondly, forests, especially vital rain forests, are still being destroyed, and this is why we need binding international agreements on the protection and sustainable use of forests — and we need them now, not years from now when it will be too late to save these vital rain forests.

Thirdly, global environment protection and sustainable development need a clearly audible voice at the United Nations. Therefore, in the short term, I think it is important that cooperation among the various environmental organizations be significantly improved. In the medium term this should lead to the creation of a global umbrella organization for environmental issues, with the United Nations Environment Programme as a major pillar.

Fourthly, the aim of a global environment partnership during the coming century should also find expression in the Charter of the United Nations.

In the past, political differences between North and South have often influenced discussions on global environmental protection and have all too often made progress difficult. For this reason I, together with President Cardoso of Brazil, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore and Deputy President Mbeki of South Africa, have decided to launch a joint initiative which, by taking these themes as examples, is designed to demonstrate that it is possible for North and South to take joint action on this vital issue for mankind.

By making this very personal commitment we seek to lend additional impetus to the worldwide protection of the natural sources of life and the idea of sustainable development, and we hope that we thus also help make this special session of the General Assembly a success.

Today, five years after Rio and two years after the conference in Berlin, people all over the world are looking to New York with new hope. They are waiting for us to send out a true and clear signal of a new dawn for the protection of the basic resources of life. The protection of creation — that is our responsibility to the generations to come.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany for his statement.

Mr. Helmut Kohl, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic.

Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Chirac (*interpretation from French*): For our planet, modernity, which is perhaps the same thing as maturity, is the capacity to judge itself, to think ahead in matters of growth and progress and to bring technological advances under control so that they are primarily of benefit to man.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Five years after Rio, this special session of the United Nations General Assembly is another appointment our planet has with itself. The purpose is to assess the dangers that continue to threaten it, to measure what has been accomplished and to define what remains to be done in order to achieve sustainable development that is harmonious and that combines economic growth, democratic progress and respect for the environment.

Rio marked the beginning of a new awareness. It was an essential step, but it is still not enough. Certain age-old convictions that the twentieth century has rendered obsolete are still only too present in our minds. Thus, it is wrong to believe that nature has the capacity to heal all the wounds inflicted on it by mankind. There are animal and plant species that have disappeared for ever. There are enormous expanses of forest that will never grow again because the soil has disappeared with the trees.

It is also presumptuous to claim that man, through his intelligence, will always be able to repair the damage wrought in the name of progress. No one knows how to reconstitute the ozone layer. No one will know how to correct the global warming caused by the greenhouse effect.

Having learned from experience, we now realize that the precautionary principle must be applied everywhere. We know this. But, five years after Rio, we must see clearly and humbly that much remains to be done in order for this principle to inspire decisions and actions. The important thing today, therefore, is to set ourselves simple, concrete but ambitious goals for the next five years.

First of all, let us finish the work of building the edifice of international rules that the precautionary principle demands. Let us agree in December at Kyoto on the aims and the modalities of our common fight against the greenhouse effect. France and its European Union partners have shown the way.

Before the end of the year, let us start to negotiate the necessary convention for the protection of our forests. My friend Chancellor Helmut Kohl has just spoken forcefully on this subject. I unreservedly support his appeal.

Finally, let us define our commitments regarding the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification.

In order to implement these texts, to monitor their implementation and to foster respect for the environment everywhere, the United Nations must have renewed and more efficient institutions centred on two hubs: Nairobi and Geneva. It must also have adequate means. The Global Environment Facility, set up thanks to a French and German initiative, plays a central role. I hope that the contributing countries meeting in Paris in September will agree to a fair replenishment of its resources. France, the world's third largest donor of official development assistance, will contribute its full share.

Among all the issues linked to the fight against poverty and the protection of the environment, there is one to which I attach particular importance: the question of water. Mankind runs a major risk of a shortage of fresh water. Consumption is increasing twice as fast as population growth, doubling every 20 years. At the turn of the century, the amount of fresh water available per capita in Africa will only be a quarter of what it was in 1950, and a third in Asia and in Latin America. Water is a source of life, but could well become a major source of conflict.

Fresh water is becoming more and more scarce and more and more threatened by pollution of all kinds. According to the World Health Organization, each year 25 million human beings — of whom 4 million are children — die of diseases linked to water pollution.

France, with the support of the entire European Union, has submitted proposals to the Commission on Sustainable Development I hope that will lead to concrete programmes and to a global partnership. It is urgent that we mobilize our resources around a few major projects.

Let us decide together that in 10 years time every village in the third world, particularly in Africa, will have its own well or access to drinking water.

Let us decide together to use the next 10 years to halve the number of urban homes that either have no access to drinking water or are not linked to a sanitation network.

Let us decide together to draw up and distribute throughout the world, in rural areas and in cities, simple rules for prudent water management.

In order to define more precisely our objectives and to mobilize still further all the necessary resources, France welcomes the World Water Council to Marseilles

and proposes to host at the beginning of next year a conference that will bring together all the actors in water management policy: Governments, local authorities, international organizations, associations and businesses. This conference would be part of the process of drafting the action plan that the Commission on Sustainable Development should adopt at its next session, in spring 1998.

Man's capacity for invention and the power he has given himself to modify the environment must be counterbalanced by one essential requirement — a sense of responsibility.

Today, it is our responsibility to protect our planet. How effective our action will be depends first and foremost on our common will and on the impetus that together we will give to this ambitious plan. There is great urgency. An attack on nature is, in fact, an attack on humankind.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I thank His Excellency the President of the French Republic for his statement.

Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Márquez, Vice-President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Ricardo Márquez, Vice-President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Márquez (Peru) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is a great honour to represent the people and the Government of Peru at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, which has been convened to take stock of the results of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and, five years on, to reaffirm international cooperation and the common but differentiated responsibilities that, constitute the core of Agenda 21 and the bases for the implementation of its commitments.

We are sure that under the able and experienced guidance of its President, the General Assembly will attain the objectives the international community hopes will come out of this special session.

The environment cannot be protected solely by the actions of environmentalists.

In Peru, Agenda 21 represents the new paradigm of sustainable human development. What we call the "Peru agenda" is Agenda 21's operational equivalent at the national level, and it provides the orientation and guidelines for national development and environmental policies. The Peru agenda has been designed to integrate economic, social, technological and environmental dimensions, thus reconciling the imperatives of economic efficiency, social and human development, and the respect we owe to nature. I must recall here that the ancient Peruvians were able to achieve that admirable synthesis in their social and political organization. Their example provides lasting inspiration for present-day Peru.

Poverty is both a cause and an effect of the destruction of the environment. Overcoming poverty and its attendant exclusion and inequality is the primary aim of the Government of President Fujimori. At the forefront of this national effort is our population policy, which combines enhancement of the key role of women in society with access by all Peruvians to basic health services, education, housing and justice and gives priority to the least advantaged and most vulnerable sectors. Social expenditure in Peru now accounts for more than 40 per cent of the national budget, and the trend is upward. However, we are aware that it is not merely a matter of allocating resources. The most important thing is to determine rationally how and in whom to invest them.

Thus, it is worth pointing out that participation by civil society jointly with governmental bodies is growing ever more important and dynamic in Peru. Both factors form part of a pattern of harmonizing interests, policies and priorities that, as in other countries, led to the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in December 1996.

At this point, Peru wishes to express its concern at the possibility that declining international cooperation for development is becoming a structural characteristic of the globalization process now under way.

The developing countries hope that this special session of the General Assembly will help reverse that trend, or at least that we will be able to reaffirm and fulfil the commitments undertaken in 1992. Of course, we also need new, specific commitments to finance the

various conventions that are part of the process that began in Rio.

The use of trade restrictions for environmental ends is still highly controversial and puts intense pressure on developing countries. At the Rio Summit, we agreed that sustainable development requires trade liberalization, mutually supportive trade and environmental policies and the transfer of adequate financial and technological resources to help developing countries towards the achievement of that aim. However, five years later, the results are not positive. These issues, especially the financial and technological issues related to the environment, have taken a back seat.

Peru has established the legal basis for an environmental policy. Its legal system contains rules for the protection and defence of the environment. Some of these rules are of a general nature, such as the Environment Code, the law establishing the National Environment Fund, the Law on Natural Resources, the law creating the National Environment Council (CONAM) and other specific laws relating to wild flora and fauna, genetic resources, pollution and the protection of highly sensitive environmental areas.

One of the most notable aspects of Peru's modernization in recent years is the process of sustainable human development. In this context, institutional actors, such as public and private bodies, have been very active in initiatives and experimentation. Noteworthy among these groups are local governments, non-governmental organizations, indigenous populations and the church. In academic circles, too, activities that are central to environmental management have been discussed.

The Government of Peru has designated 1997 as the Year for reforestation, and 100 million trees will be planted. This decision is an expression of Peru's awareness of and commitment to a matter that is vital to our future, and one that we consider to be a priority for the entire international community. It is well known that Peru ranks among the countries having the most abundant natural resources on Earth: vast tropical forests and mega-biodiversity that is greatly admired all over the world. In this domain, our indigenous peoples possess an ancient mastery and knowledge of approximately 1,300 species of plants with medicinal properties.

Peru is an Amazonian country. Given its geographical magnitude, its exceptional bio-diversity and the role it plays as a macro-regulator of climates and water resources, the Amazon region clearly has extraordinary potential to take the lead in the large-scale implementation of a modern civilization with a biomass that is protected in the sustainable use of renewable resources. Consequently, the policy of sustainable development of the Amazon, including the preservation of its vast resources, constitutes a contribution to a global sustainable-development strategy by Peru and all the member countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty.

The great challenge of sustainable development is to continue to develop the capacity to design and implement international programmes that involve Governments, multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations prepared to support the efforts of our peoples, whose aspirations and aims will be reaffirmed in the General Assembly through this review and assessment, harmonizing all the interests of the international community in a balanced and equitable manner.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Peru for his statement.

Mr. Ricardo Márquez, Vice-President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, President of the Republic of Kazakstan.

Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, President of the Republic of Kazakstan, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Nazarbaev (*interpretation from Russian*): The agenda of this special session of the United Nations General Assembly vividly reflects the whole range of formidable challenges facing mankind on the eve of a new century. Because of the globalization of international relations, it has become necessary to reject old stereotypes, technocratic approaches and attempts to achieve economic growth at any cost. It is therefore very important to adhere strictly to the principles of the Rio Declaration, ensuring that economic growth takes place only in relationship to processes of social development and environmental security.

In this respect, is it possible to talk about well-being when we refer to the 300 million people living in the newly independent States? Absolutely not, because that

area, which occupies one sixth of the world's surface, still lacks both sustainable in terms of economic development and environmental security. In carrying out reforms, these States have to face considerable social costs. The experience of the majority of the post-socialist countries shows that the reforms and the social aspects of economic development are in conflict with each other. In other words, the social price of the reforms is high. However, the only alternative to the reforms is stagnation, poverty and hopelessness.

For half a century the territory of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics witnessed pollution from production facilities that defied ecological control. Thousands of enterprises were established that did not meet the most basic environmental-protection requirements. As a result, nature was violated and, unfortunately, it continues to be. Such effects on the environment have, indeed, been globalized.

By the beginning of the next century this process will be intensified. As they develop their natural resources, many States with economies in transition may well become the main polluters of the environment. I am sure that the international community does not want this to happen and would prefer all production facilities to be clean and ecologically safe and produce little waste. That is why the United Nations should play a more active role in the intensive exchange of clean technologies and their transfer to countries with economies in transition. I believe that the United Nations could create a mechanism, similar to that of the Coordinating Committee on Export Control (COCOM), that would control the non-proliferation of polluting, toxic and hazardous technologies and industries.

Each country, however, should deal with the task of sustainable development largely on its own. We have therefore defined our own strategy and tactics for economic reform and have achieved considerable progress in this respect. During its five years of independence, Kazakstan has completely changed its system of economic and social relations. Macroeconomic stabilization has been achieved, the privatization of all State property has almost been completed and a trend towards a growth in output is emerging.

There are global problems that many countries cannot solve alone, however. In these situations, the international community should come to the rescue. In the case of Kazakstan, the problems include the many years of tests at the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground and the disappearance of the Aral Sea. The Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground used to be the largest in the world; its size was comparable with that of the territory of many States: 18.5 thousand square kilometres. Some 470 explosions, representing about 70 per cent of all the nuclear- weapon tests of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, were conducted there, causing enormous damage to the health of the population and to the natural environment.

We consider this issue from the point of view of fundamental principle. Nuclear weapons represent a tragedy not only for the people of Kazakstan, but for all the nations of the world. That is why we have every reason to speak about the responsibility of the nuclear Powers for the damage caused to the population and the natural environment of the States where tests have been conducted. Kazakstan proposes that the nuclear Powers should make concrete their responsibility in this respect by creating an international fund for the rehabilitation of the health of the population and the environment in regions affected by nuclear- weapon tests.

We are also seriously concerned about the global aspects of the problem of the Aral Sea, which is practically disappearing from the map. This tragedy casts a shadow over the entire world and the whole of civilization. The region is witnessing the fundamental degradation of the environment, a disastrous shortage of fresh water, the rapid worsening of the health of the population and an increase in forced migration. This ecological disaster area, which has a population of more than 4 million people, reaches into the territory of all the Central Asian States.

We and a number of international organizations have come up with various projects designed to solve the problems of the Aral Sea. None of them, however, has been completed. Each State of the region is still dealing with ecological disasters on its own; this disaster, however, has global dimensions. Particles of salt sediment from the Aral Sea have been found in Europe and in the Arctic Ocean.

Moreover, the world community cannot ignore these tragedies because Central Asia is a new geopolitical and geoeconomic reality. In the twenty-first century, this region will become a major supplier of hydrocarbons to the world markets. The Kazakstan part of the Caspian Sea has more than 15 billion tonnes of hydrocarbon raw materials whose development will involve practically all the industrialized countries. It is therefore necessary to solve the ecological problems of the region today if we do not want to deal with their metastases tomorrow.

I believe that it might be possible to establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, a so-called "inventory" of global problems, which can be addressed at two levels, the first requiring the participation of the world community as a whole, and the second requiring regional and national intervention.

When we speak of the importance of these issues, we turn to the United Nations, on which we continue to pin our hopes for a new world order. I wish Secretary-General Kofi Annan success in his efforts to ensure the efficiency of the United Nations. I also wish the special session success in developing approaches to the questions of sustainable development and solving the problem of improving our planet's climate, thereby bearing out the hopes of present and future generations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the President of the Republic of Kazakstan for his statement.

Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, President of the Republic of Kazakstan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Italian Republic.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Italian Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Prodi (Italy): When the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development met in Rio in 1992, the world was confronted with a twofold challenge: to make development compatible with the sustainability of the environment and to insure a more balanced and global, long-lasting development. Five years later, we live in a world with more pollution, more consumption of natural resources and more waste, but with less biodiversity, less forest area, less available fresh water, less soil and a depleted stratospheric ozone layer in some regions of the planet.

Today, humanity as a whole uses over one third more resources and eco-services than nature can regenerate. In 1992, this ecological deficit was only one quarter. Five years after the Rio Conference, we are further away from sustainability.

This special session of the General Assembly provides us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to sustainable development and to a pragmatic, result-oriented implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

The notion of sustainable development, adopted by the Rio Conference, is the key principle by which the implementation of Agenda 21 should be guided. Today, however, sustainable development remains a rather abstract principle, whose degree of application in policy development and implementation at the national and regional levels has thus far been inadequate. This inadequacy is one of the main causes of the shortcomings that have been experienced during the past five years.

Integration is fundamental in sustainable development. It is the only way to ensure that the three pillars of Agenda 21 — economic development, social development and environmental protection — are considered together and that sustainability is made operational. Of course, integration is possible only if appropriate institutional arrangements are in place — and institutional arrangements depend on political will.

Italy shares the general view that the eradication of poverty and sustainable patterns of consumption and production are fundamental goals of the international community and key issues on the agenda of the special session. With the right policies and international support, the number of people living in acute poverty could fall by half over the next quarter of a century. My country is ready to make all possible contributions to help the poorest countries to reduce poverty in the shortest possible time and to improve the quality of life of all sectors of their societies, including the full integration of women into the process of social and economic development. In this context, renewed attention must be focused on children's rights, especially supporting the projects aimed at creating child-friendly cities.

As far as the issue of sustainable patterns of consumption and production is concerned, we are convinced that developed countries should take the lead in the process of developing environmentally sound technologies and environmental policies, implementing the necessary changes in their own countries, while the newly industrialized countries should endeavour to reduce the stress that their fast rate of growth puts on the ecosystem.

At the same time, it should be recognized that the lowest-income countries should achieve fast social and economic improvements without reproducing our models of development and industrialization; the environmental

cost might otherwise be unsustainable. It is our duty to help these countries move towards more appropriate models of development. I would therefore like to state again our support for initiatives aimed at achieving the goals of sustainable development, such as the World Solar Programme in the energy field.

Financial resources are essential to sustainable development. Agenda 21 made it clear that progress towards socio-economic and environmental development would require additional investment and finance. At the time of Rio, almost all industrialized countries recommitted themselves to raising foreign assistance levels towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP). This has not materialized. On the contrary, development assistance as a share of donor countries' GNP decreased in the last five years. This downward trend needs to be reversed.

The transfer of environmentally friendly technologies and foreign private investments can also play a very important role in promoting sustainable development, but foreign private investors respond positively only to stable, well-managed economies with a track record of low inflation and correct policies. Therefore, donor countries and international financial institutions should join efforts to help those countries which have not yet succeeded in attracting private flows of capitals to create a more attractive business climate for foreign direct investments.

I fully share the position expressed by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mr. Kok, on behalf of the European Union, on the various issues on the agenda. In particular, Italy looks forward to the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Kyoto at the end of this year. The Conference should adopt realistic, quantified and legally binding commitments on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Linked to the protection of the atmosphere is the problem of deforestation. Italy supports the proposal to convene, as soon as possible, an intergovernmental negotiating committee.

My country has the honour to host the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which will be held in Rome from 29 September to 10 October 1997. As highlighted at the Denver Summit of the Eight, the Conference will mark the beginning of the implementation of the Convention by promoting effective plans of action — in the Mediterranean area, for example — and experiences of joint implementation, and will provide the opportunity to renew sound and concrete international cooperation through a better use of available resources to address this issue.

Progress in the past five years clearly has not been what we had hoped. If development is to become sustainable, greater efforts are needed, more human and material resources need to be mobilized and a more cost-effective use of available resources is necessary. Bad habits and wrong behaviour must change if we want to bequeath to the generations to come a better world for a better living. Governments, corporations, consumers and public agencies all need to abandon activities that degrade the environment and must invest in those activities which conserve ecosystems for the future.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Prime Minister of the Italian Republic for his statement.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Italian Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Menem (*interpretation from Spanish*): Those of us who had the privilege of participating in the Rio Conference in June 1992 come here today with particular interest to review the implementation of Agenda 21.

I should like to reiterate now what we said then: It is time for us to put a definitive end to the idea of choosing between economic development and the preservation of the environment. As was already stated in Agenda 21, we need to reaffirm today that only through policies that give priority to environmental issues and to forms of management that duly take into account the needs of regional and national economies can we move forward for the benefit of our peoples.

Argentina included in the reform of its national Constitution the right of all individuals to enjoy a healthy and balanced environment capable of satisfying their

present needs without jeopardizing those of future generations.

In order to achieve sustainable development, we must not only eradicate poverty but also eliminate wealth coupled with compulsive consumerism, which leads to unsustainable practices and lifestyles.

Policies designed to promote social and economic development may fail if they are not designed to include an environmental component. We must reconcile measures to preserve the environment and promote sustainable development with the promotion and preservation of an open, equitable and non-discriminatory multilateral trade system.

Humankind is facing a real crisis in terms of the availability of fresh water, which constitutes an economic and social asset whose quantity and quality must be preserved. My country attaches particular importance to the participation of private capital in expanding water supply and water treatment. At the regional level, we are working on developing joint programmes of action with relation to shared water resources.

As to the conservation of our ecosystem, we have, since the Rio Summit, created 10 new protected areas. Protected areas now cover a total of 147,000 square kilometres, representing the equivalent of 5.5 per cent of our continental territory. In 1997, five new national parks will be added. This continues the trend of the last five years, which saw the creation of 4,000 square kilometres of protected areas. These areas will help to guarantee our biodiversity and ensure that our native forests will be used in a sustainable manner.

Argentina, whose Atlantic coast spans over 4,000 kilometres, attaches great importance to the study and protection of the oceans. In this regard, the preservation of marine biological resources demands that non-overexploitative fishing practices be used, both in jurisdictional waters and on the high seas, beyond 200 miles. The third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea was an important but wholly insufficient step forward.

The United Nations should reaffirm its role as guarantor of a clear and workable legal framework to prevent disputes among States that fish beyond the 200-mile limit. We must ensure the sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of all humankind. We are convinced that the overexploitation of marine resources may generate conflicts that could, in turn, endanger peace and security, the maintenance of which is the primary purpose of this Organization.

Environmental issues have acquired a global dimension. For this reason, we must take advantage of the synergy provided by regional structures. The Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) has undertaken all the necessary studies to improve production systems in the framework of the concept of sustainable development.

As concerns multilateral cooperation, we are paying particular attention to international financial machinery. We believe that these mechanisms should be periodically reviewed in order to set priorities. It should be possible for the Commission on Sustainable Development to assess the degree of effectiveness and equity of allocation of financial resources.

Argentina wishes to reiterate its unequivocal support for the United Nations Environment Programme as "the international voice for the defence of the environment". We are confident that the recently created High-level Committee as a subsidiary organ of the Governing Council, will play a dynamic role in determining and following up policies aimed at regional decentralization and adjustment of the Programme.

Significant progress towards sustainable development in Argentina is reflected in the country profile of the implementation of Agenda 21 presented by my Government. Nonetheless, it is equally clear that our efforts must still be increased. Here we must bear in mind that national actions are of the essence, but international cooperation is also necessary.

Twenty-five years ago, at the Stockholm Conference, Juan Domingo Perón, who three times was President of Argentina, pleaded for a change of course in the suicidal path being followed by the world — a path of environmental pollution and the waste of natural resources.

I believe that the Rio de Janeiro Conference signalled that change of direction for humankind that President Perón had called for. Now that we are walking together along the right path, we must step up our pace, and as President Perón said,

> "It is better to act than to speak; it is better to act than to promise".

The time has come to set aside promises; the time has come to take action.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the President of the Argentine Republic for his statement.

Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations A/S-19/PV.2

General Assembly
Nineteenth Special Session

Official Records

2nd plenary meeting
Monday, 23 June 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/S-19/20)

The President: I should like to inform members that since the issuance of document A/S-19/20 in provisional form, Guinea-Bissau has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Victor S. Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Victor S. Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Chernomyrdin (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): In general, Russia offers a positive appraisal of what has been done to implement Agenda 21 and the other decisions of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Indeed, priority areas and topical issues in the spheres of environmental protection and sustainable development have been identified more precisely. This field has come to the foreground of United Nations activities.

Global conventions on climate change and on biodiversity, born at Rio de Janeiro, are already working, and conditions for launching new mechanisms of international legal regulation in the environmental field are being developed. Much has been done, but no tangible improvement in the Earth's ecology has yet been achieved. The threat of further deterioration of the Earth's environment persists.

The goal of this authoritative forum is to give new and powerful organizational impetus to international environmental cooperation. It is also of crucial importance to secure the balance of interests achieved at Rio among all groups of nations, including the group of countries with economies in transition.

Under the present difficult circumstances, Russia is doing its best to support the efforts of the international community to solve these priority global problems. We are meeting the obligations we have undertaken. In spring 1996 we adopted the concept of the transition of the Russian Federation to sustainable development; at present we are engaged in intensive work on a draft State strategy to implement the goals of the final documents of the Rio Conference.

97-85723 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Let me now address some of the priority areas for further discussion. We believe that the protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases after the year 2000, which is being worked out under the Berlin mandate, should be legally binding and should take into account the common but differentiated responsibilities of States, including, of course, those with economies in transition. In the past few years, in fact, Russia has palpably reduced such greenhouse-gas emissions. We are ready to agree upon new, authoritative measures on compliance with the provisions of the Convention, including agreement on such reductions in emissions.

Russia is firmly committed to the principles of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Despite the prevailing difficulties connected with the introduction of other technologies and alternative substances, we will continue to count on the support of the world community and will do everything possible in this area.

Russia is interested in full-scale participation in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. Practical steps in this field will follow the development and adoption of an additional annex to that Convention reflecting the specific conditions of economies in transition.

As a forest Power possessing one fifth of the Earth's forests, Russia considers it necessary to accelerate work on a convention on forests based on a worldwide comprehensive approach. It would be counterproductive to divide this issue into segments.

We also believe that due attention must be paid to such vital issues as the quality of the world's fresh water resources; the formulation of new, more effective agreements on conservation of the ecosystems of the world's oceans; agreement on international legal mechanisms to regulate the use of persistent organic pollutants; environmentally sound transport; urbanization; and food security.

We are in favour of stepping up the efforts aimed at addressing such cross-sectoral issues as the financing of environmental protection activities, the transition to better use of power, changes in the structure of production and consumption, the establishment of optimal conditions between trade and the environment, ensuring equal access to ecologically safe technology and, of course, stable and predictable financing for environmental activities at all levels. We understand that we cannot do everything at once, but we can and must build up the effectiveness of our useful work together.

Russia views positively the arrangements achieved during the preparatory process for agreements on the rational distribution of functions and duties between the Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Environment Programme and other environmental protection structures, both inside and outside the United Nations system. We believe that it is important to establish coordination in this field and to pay due attention to effective interaction with international financial institutions, the Global Environment Facility and the World Trade Organization.

We believe it is relevant to have a State-by-State integration of existing monitoring and compliance systems of specific changes in the environment — a single global system for ecological monitoring. This is needed for scientific analysis and for correct, concrete political measures at the national, regional and international levels. In addition, such a system could become, in our view, a serious project for international cooperation in the area of conversion.

We also see good prospects in the work on indicators for sustainable development, which are now being prepared in many countries. Ensuring the comparability of indicators and assessments of progress is an extremely important sphere for international interaction.

In conclusion, I should like to express my confidence that our forum will successfully carry out the mission entrusted to it and will take new and important decisions allowing the international community to make real progress towards the sustainable development of all States and the ecological reconstruction of our shared, common house in the interests of present and future generations.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation for his statement.

Mr. Victor S. Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. António Guterres, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Guterres (Portugal) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by delegation)*: The Rio Summit was a landmark event in that it launched a global model of partnership for the promotion of sustainable development, a concept which integrates and mutually reinforces economic and social objectives with the preservation of the environment; a concept which is centred on promoting the well-being of the world's present population without jeopardizing that of future generations; and which is open, democratic, participatory and respectful of human rights and of individual liberties.

The Rio Summit's positive results are noteworthy, but it is also undeniable that it has not been effective in halting the degradation of Earth's life-support systems. Globally, both the world's environment and development are today far short of the expectations of five years ago. It is high time the Summit's conclusions were put into effect.

Portugal has sought to fulfil the commitments of Rio by formulating concrete goals and objectives aimed at sustainable development by the end of the century. In view of this, we have established a National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development, implemented a strategic plan for waste management and sewage treatment, given priority to nature conservation, implemented environmental agreements with partners in the industrial and agro-industrial sectors, and stimulated environmental education both within and outside schools.

But it is important to recognize that the implementation of Agenda 21 is still very deficient throughout the world. To a great extent this situation is due to the least developed countries' lack of resources to promote development. The responsibility for this lack of resources rests mostly with the developed countries. We believe that we can and should do more to promote development and eradicate poverty.

I also reaffirm Portugal's pledge to contribute to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as a principal financing instrument for Agenda 21, and to strengthen it in line with the proposals of the European Union. However, the GEF by itself will not be sufficient to meet all needs. Portugal also wishes to see development assistance being more directly geared to capacity building, the transfer of technology and the sharing of scientific and technical knowledge.

In the context of North-South dialogue, we have a particular interest in partnership, exchange and shared responsibility with those African countries that — along with Brazil — make up the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. Founded one year ago, the Community has already held its first inter-ministerial conference on the environment. The Lisbon Declaration, adopted at that conference, aims at reinforcing the implementation of Agenda 21 in the seven signatory countries, which have a combined population of 200 million, as well as the setting up of a common environmental observatory.

In the framework of Portugal's participation in the Commission on Sustainable Development, we endorse the initiatives of the European Union with regard to water, energy and eco-efficiency, and we have the following priorities: to bring free trade into harmony with sustainable development while respecting, without disguised protectionism, the multilateral environmental agreements; to support the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the timely conclusion of a protocol on biosafety; to adopt at last a convention on forests on a global scale which encompasses all types of forests and to promote their conservation and sustainable management; and to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

For Portugal, as a maritime country, the oceans are the main and most immediate priority. Signs that the oceans are in an environmental crisis are clearly evident. This crisis must be fought on several fronts by changing the current practice of over-exploitation of living marine resources; by preserving marine biodiversity; by defining and adopting a code of good practices for the integrated management of coastal zones; by combating marine pollution of every kind, including the deliberate dumping of waste in seas and oceans; by strengthening global monitoring and control of the oceans; and by supporting research and technological development of the marine sciences.

In this context, Portugal follows with particular attention the relevant work of the independent World Commission on the Oceans, headed by Mário Soares.

The last World Exposition of this century, Expo '98, will open in Lisbon in less than one year. Its theme will be the ocean.

The International Year of the Ocean will also be celebrated in 1998, a project for which Portugal has lent its full support. Portugal commits itself to be in the forefront of the global efforts for the protection and use of this essential asset of our planet, the oceans.

It is my hope that five years from now we will be able to account for a clearly more positive balance in favour of sustainable development than what we have today.

As a country and as a people, Portugal is ready to participate in all the efforts needed to attain this objective.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic for his statement.

Mr. António Guterres, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Victor Ciorbea, Prime Minister of Romania.

Mr. Victor Ciorbea, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Ciorbea (Romania) (*interpretation from French*): It is a great pleasure for me to participate in this important special session of the General Assembly.

Once again, the world Organization is proving itself to be a broad-based forum that is sensitive to the great challenges facing the world. The presence of so many Heads of State and Government at this session confirms the interest in, and the political will necessary for, continuing and culminating the efforts we began in Rio.

Nothing in Romanian society escaped the effects of pollution during the country's more than 50 years of communism. This is why the Romanian people and the State institutions have such a difficult task.

In the six months our Government has been in power, we have launched a comprehensive reform programme designed to improve the economic, social, political, psychological and, of course, natural environment.

The unprecedented pace of change in Romanian society, beyond the fact that it demonstrates the dedication of the Romanian people to the shared values of democratic countries and the political will of the Government to make up for lost time, has already brought us breathable air in Romania.

The reform programme of the Government of Romania pays particular attention to integrating environmental questions with the needs of economic development. This principle has provided the basis for drawing up the Strategy and National Plan of Action for the protection of the environment and the sustainable use of resources, which include high-priority objectives relating to economic restructuring and the renewal of production capacity through the introduction of effective and non-polluting technology. In the same context, the National Forum for the Environment and Sustainable Development, the National Agency for the Environment, which has branches in all departments of the country, and the National Centre for Sustainable Development have been established, international conventions have been ratified and specific agreements with other countries, particularly neighbouring countries, have been signed. The Government of Romania is aware of the need and the opportunity for cross-border cooperation and the establishment of Euro-regions.

We are paying due attention to and taking action to protect, and ensure the sustainable use of, the resources of the Danube Basin and the Black Sea, as well as mountainous regions, through a significant expansion of protected areas.

Romania's integration into the structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development would be a sure way for us to meet the objectives of Agenda 21 more quickly. We are determined to take measures to ensure that our economic reform and restructuring policy and improvements in our legislative and institutional framework will help bring about the specific programmes and activities required.

This special session must ensure that the integrated approach — the key to Rio's success — will be applied universally. If, together, we can agree on a time for another session devoted to Rio + 10, we will ensure that the process launched in 1992 and the activities that have emerged from this process at the national, regional and global levels will continue.

In our view, and in the light of our experience, the effective implementation of the objectives of Agenda 21 at the national level must be given priority and action must be focused on problems in the areas of energy, transportation, agriculture and, in particular, forests.

The programmes launched in Europe, such as "Environment for Europe", provide us with an example we can follow.

The political declaration to be adopted at this session is designed to reaffirm our political will to act in a spirit of partnership and with greater effectiveness to guarantee future generations a healthy environment and a socio-economic framework that can promote progress and prosperity for all.

I should like to assure the Assembly that Romania is fully prepared to contribute positively and constructively to the successful conclusion of our work.

In conclusion, allow me to remind the Assembly that Romania associated itself with the position expressed by His Excellency Mr. Wim Kok, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, on behalf of the European Union.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of Romania for his statement.

Mr. Victor Ciorbea, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Mbeki (South Africa): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, was a landmark event in humanity's endeavours to meet its needs while simultaneously preserving our planet's natural beauty and resources.

Today, we are gathered to assess our progress towards sustainable development and to recommit ourselves to the objectives clearly laid down and agreed to in Agenda 21.

Developing countries have made significant strides towards putting in place and strengthening their institutions and institutional capacity in terms of Agenda 21. Its implementation nevertheless requires the mobilization of resources, particularly for developing countries. In measuring our achievements since the Conference we cannot forget that the resources committed there have yet to be made available and purposefully deployed. The full implementation of Agenda 21 requires financial resources to be leveraged from several sources.

Official development assistance continues to be a crucial mechanism for funding in developing countries and in the least developed countries in particular. In this context, we would like to reiterate the call for the commitment contained in Agenda 21 — that developed countries should reach the accepted United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance — to be met as soon as possible.

This nineteenth special session of the General Assembly should encourage the international financial institutions and other development agencies to strengthen their commitment to sustainable development. Furthermore, the role and importance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the environmental sphere also deserves to be reinforced and enhanced. The lack of adequate funding for UNEP needs to be urgently addressed. My Government accordingly urges the international community generously to increase funding for UNEP.

The replenishment of the Global Environment Facility will also have special significance for the implementation of Agenda 21. Consequently, the General Assembly at this special session should recognize the importance of meeting the financial obligations involved in the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility. Given the increasing inter-relationship between trade, the environment and development, the Commission on Sustainable Development should encourage and contribute to the important debate on trade and the environment. In addition, urgent and innovative solutions need to be found to the questions of technology transfer and capacity building in developing countries, without which sustainable development cannot be secured.

In many regions of the world, water resources are threatened by unsustainable patterns of use and by the degradation of aquatic environments. As water resources are of the utmost importance to many countries in Africa and other semi-arid areas in the world, their protection and sustainable use are essential if we are to meet basic human needs, achieve social justice and equality and harmonize economic development, human welfare and

environmental protection. We consider it imperative that substantial global, regional, and national commitments and actions be entered into and sustained in order to reverse the existing negative trends and to safeguard water resources. In pursuit of these objectives, our own region of southern Africa has signed its first regional water agreement, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Shared Water Resources, which is also due to come into effect soon.

A central objective, and a necessary condition for success, of the process of sustainable development, remains and must remain the eradication of poverty. South Africa believes that in the face of persistent poverty occurring in the context of increasing globalization, it is essential that a more resilient global partnership to be forged if we are serious in our quest for sustainable development. The global partnership must build on the acceptance of the need to adopt a balanced and integrated approach to environmental and developmental questions. Honest dialogue and genuine cooperation are fundamental to such a partnership.

We need urgently to prepare ourselves for the developmental and environmental challenges which the twenty-first century will place upon humanity as we strive to promote peace and advance the objectives of Agenda 21, including the emancipation and empowerment of women and the millions in our world who are marginalized by lack of development. Central to this is the Commission on Sustainable Development, which should remain the principal policy forum for deliberations regarding sustainable development.

In this context, we would like to recognize and welcome the work that has been done by and through the Commission to develop a consensus on the wide variety of issues encapsulated in the concept of sustainable development. We trust that the documents which will be adopted at this special session will constitute a real programme of common action to deal with the challenges facing all of us. To this end, the South African Government is committed to playing its full part in future efforts to advance the commonly agreed goals.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa for his statement.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Jagland (Norway): The purpose of this session is for us to rededicate ourselves to action. We have to renew and strengthen our commitment to the national implementation of what we agreed on five years ago. Let us be clear about one thing: Agenda 21 is not up for renegotiation. But we can all improve our performance, and we should all pledge to do so.

Today, I would like to focus on three areas where our joint resolve will help put us on track to a sustainable future. First, we must rededicate ourselves to our commitment to combatting poverty. Poverty is the biggest threat to the environment. In Rio, the industrialized nations recommitted themselves to the 20- year-old target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in official development assistance. Five years later, we are not getting any closer to that objective; quite the contrary.

Foreign private investments are increasing in the developing world, and that fact should be welcomed. But private investments tend not to reach the poorest countries. Some 1.3 billion people live on incomes of less than $1 a day. Millions lack access to basic health care services. Private investments rarely finance hospitals, primary health care or schools, services that are all basic requirements for sustainable development. Let me also emphasize in this connection the critical role of women in the achievement of sustainable development.

Norway remains committed to development assistance. Since 1993, we have increased it from $1 billion to $1.3 billion; that is an increase of 30 per cent in four years. It is the goal of my Government to move to 1 per cent of GDP in development assistance over the coming years.

This brings me to my second point: the huge task of securing growth within the limits set by the environment. As a follow-up to Rio, Norway has promoted the concept of sustainable production and consumption. We in the North have a long way to go to save energy, make our production cleaner and our consumption leaner. And we need to enable the developing countries to make a great leap towards eco-efficient production. We must avoid a

situation in which developing countries base their growth on the most polluting technologies. What the industrialized countries can do is offer their experience and transfer their environmentally sound technology.

Norway is giving priority to the allocation of additional funds for the transfer of such technology. Together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) we are preparing concrete programmes of technology transfer. I pledge here today the readiness of my Government to allocate a package of an additional $15 million to finance such programmes. We believe this initiative will give direct results, and I invite others to join us.

We need a global transition towards cleaner energy resources. We need fair burden-sharing and mechanisms to implement our obligations jointly so that we can maximize our efforts. These should be key features of the climate agreement that we are preparing for the Kyoto meeting in December.

Thirdly, I would like to focus on my own region. The Arctic region remains one of the world's least polluted regions. But the risks to this area are real, largely caused by substances transported from sources outside the Arctic. The Arctic Governments, in close cooperation with the indigenous peoples, will step up the work to mobilize support for the fragile Arctic environment.

Let me also mention the threat from the large concentration of military installations. With the cold war gone, we have discovered one of the most serious legacies of the arms race: the often uncontrolled piles of nuclear and other dangerous wastes. This is a major environmental issue. I would suggest that it be placed high up on the international agenda, also in connection with forthcoming disarmament negotiations.

We made it clear in Rio: Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible. This perspective must continue to guide our action. Today, millions of land-mines represent one of the world's most serious environmental problems. They lay fertile land to waste. They cause immense suffering, not least to innocent children playing in the killing fields.

Time is short. We need to conclude a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel mines. My Government is hosting a diplomatic conference in Oslo in September with the aim of negotiating such an agreement. I urge all participating countries to contribute to that end.

Gradually we are setting a new course. We must ask ourselves: Do we have the tools we need to manage the international environmental process? We need to give environment and development higher priority, higher status, better focus and more resources within the United Nations system. In the follow-up to this session, we should address the need for some kind of taxation on an international level whereby part of our consumption — for example, a tax on aviation fuel — can benefit our common endeavour for sustainable development.

I also believe that we should take a fresh look on how we organize our work. Today, convention secretariats are assembled around the world. Our efforts often lack unity of purpose. We may need a world environmental organization to provide a clearer and more authoritative voice on environmental contributions to sustainable development. Let us make this a part of the United Nations reform process.

The younger generations are impatient. They have a right to be so. It is our responsibility to leave the next generation with at least the same opportunities we had. Their pressure for change should guide us.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway for his statement.

Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Rasmussen (Denmark): Let me start by underlining that I fully support the statement made earlier by my colleague from the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. And let me start by saying also that I feel that the voice of the European Union today is more sustained and more committed than it has ever been before.

Let me be frank by saying that I feel it is necessary that it be so, because if we go straight to the point, we can state as a fact now that, if we are not doing what

needs to be done, it is certainly not for lack of knowledge. Since Rio, we have shared more knowledge of what is right and wrong than ever before.

What has happened? Certainly not enough.

Five years ago in Rio, the world community committed itself to a number of well-defined goals — difficult goals, yes, but not impossible goals. Today, yes, there are some smaller lights; yes, there are some smaller achievements. But let us be honest today: We have not lived up to those solemn commitments. We did not do what we were supposed to do.

It is time for action. The fight against poverty must be placed on top of our agenda. The gap between rich and poor people has widened. At our Social Summit in Copenhagen, we also realized that education, health and participation for women are fundamentals. We realized that you cannot have a secure State without secure people, without secure nature. Now it is time for action. Now we need decisions to reverse this trend.

Sustainable growth and development will not be achieved unless all human resources are mobilized. Empowering women is a part of this. We have to realize that everyone, including indigenous peoples, has a crucial contribution to make to sustainable development. Basic human rights are a part of this agenda.

No human being can survive without fresh water. May I remind the Assembly that about one third of the world's population does not have access to clean drinking water. It is urgent that we take the necessary decisions to ensure access to and protection of fresh water. We must make this the focus of Agenda 21.

I think that the production and use of sustainable and renewable energy are equally important. We need an agenda for energy in the twenty-first century. We need to decide and to act now. And I also think that we have the knowledge here. Let me just mention my own humble country. We contribute about 60 per cent of the world's wind-power-based energy today. We gladly share this technology with the poorer countries and we invite cooperation with this ambitious goal.

Sustainable development will not be achieved without special attention to vulnerable environments. The forest resources of the world must be preserved. Protection of the arctic environment must be given high priority. We support a strengthening of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We find that legally binding reduction targets for greenhouse gasses must be the result of our forthcoming meeting in Kyoto.

Globalization demands political decisions to reach our goals. First, the markets of the rich nations should be open to developing countries. Fair trade is a must. Secondly, we have to ensure that developing countries are not exposed to risks no longer accepted by industrialized countries. Thirdly, we must cooperate to improve working conditions. Fourthly, we must ensure that poor countries do not become markets for outdated technology or recipients of hazardous waste.

We should go together. We should cooperate. We should strengthen our environmental education and training. We should realize new, advanced green technologies. A sustainable future is an ecological future.

Listening to the voice of the poor countries, I hear them saying,

> "Yes, we are prepared to cooperate and shoulder our responsibility for sustainable growth. But then you, the richer countries, have to live up to your commitments, both as far as sustainable growth is concerned and as far as development aid is concerned".

I feel that the most important commitment of all from Rio was this one: that we all promised to strive to achieve the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent in official development assistance — something for something.

My country has reached this goal. In fact, we are at 1 per cent, and we are determined to continue. On top of this, we have made additional funds available for the follow-up of Rio. We have realized a substantial part of Agenda 21 from Rio, and we are prepared to go further.

Globally, however, in the five years since Rio, overall official development assistance in relation to gross national income has decreased rather than increased.

Why are we here? We are here to confirm what we have already decided. Now it is time to act and reverse this trend. The future is built on concrete actions to fulfil the commitments we entered into at Rio. The challenge confronting us this week is to transform these commitments into action plans.

I know that we cannot fulfil all of our commitments overnight. But let us unite in one decision, one single decision: let us unite to reverse this trend in order to make our commitments credible.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark for his statement.

Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. John Bruton, Prime Minister of Ireland.

Mr. John Bruton, Prime Minister of Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Bruton (Ireland): "Each person", wrote the Irish poet John Hewitt, has the right to say, "we shall not be outcast on the world".

In the five years since the Rio Summit, 450 million people have been added to the total human population of the world. Nine out of every 10 births take place in developing countries. We are now experiencing the acceleration of history.

Five years ago, the Rio Earth Summit established sustainable development as a leading goal and challenge for our times. Sustainable development is about empowerment. It is about combating social exclusion, whether within nations or within communities. It is about building bridges of partnership between developed and developing countries. It is about protecting the global environment as the shared birthright of all peoples and as an inheritance to be safely guarded and cherished for those who come after us.

Rio critically highlighted the associated problems of poverty and underdevelopment, and their relationship with environmental degradation. It recognized that combating poverty is essential to achieving sustainable development. It called for a new global partnership involving all countries in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities. In adopting Agenda 21 it set out a framework programme for the pursuit of sustainable development throughout the world.

Our task at this special session is not to reinvent or renegotiate Agenda 21. However, we have to recognize that its potential has been only partially achieved. The establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the commencement of major environmental conventions have been important institutional advances. There has been considerable success at local, national and international levels in the involvement of a range of organizations and groups in promoting Agenda 21.

But there is also accumulating evidence of unsustainable global trends. Poverty and underdevelopment continue to be a serious cause of environmental degradation, with — to take one indicator — half of the world's population still lacking access to basic sanitation. The reality of human-induced climate change is now even more clearly documented than it was five years ago. Forest and species loss, soil degradation and desertification have not been reversed. The arable food-growing area per person in the world is falling all the time, and increases in crop yields may not keep up with this decline in the available acreage. There are now enough boats, hooks and nets in the world to catch twice as many fish as there are in the sea. In short, a global partnership based on sustainable development is still far from fully established.

This conference must reaffirm the relevance and urgency of the Rio Agenda. It must also take account of new driving forces of change. Globalization of the international economy has proceeded with unstoppable momentum since Rio and is reshaping our world in ways that we still have fully to grasp and understand. Globalization does bring great benefits but it also poses new challenges to the promotion of sustainable development in the years ahead.

A new partnership must be forged based on a number of imperatives. Ireland believes that development cooperation policy must continue to play a vital role in bridging the divide between developed and developing countries. We have for this reason increased our development cooperation budget threefold since Rio and are committed to making steady progress towards the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product.

Development cooperation is needed more than ever if we are to build on the progress already achieved by breaking down walls of exclusion and marginalization. We in the developed world have a clear obligation to strengthen the ability of developing countries to promote and sustain their own economic development.

All of us need to intensify policies and actions for the better conservation and management of natural resources. Present consumption and production patterns in the developed world are unsustainable. And in many cases, these unsustainable patterns exist because of misguided subsidies and tax breaks which politicians have difficulty changing because of either vested interests or the costs of the short-term dislocations involved in getting rid of these subsidies. These patterns place our national environments under stress; they are the major contributor to global pollution; and they impose an unfair burden on the less developed countries. Per-capita carbon emissions range from 5.3 tons in the United States to 2.4 tons in Japan to just 0.3 tons of carbon emissions in India. Economic growth of this kind must be decoupled from the intensification of environmental impacts and problems.

Ireland has taken important initiatives, both nationally and in cooperation with our European Union partners, towards making a reality of sustainable development.

We in Ireland have been experiencing historically very high rates of growth since 1993, and it has been an explicit concern of the Irish Government to ensure that this is reconciled with a sustainable environmental outcome.

This special session must renew the momentum and the urgency of the Rio process, and we must continue that work at Kyoto.

Climate change is a critical test of international cooperation for sustainable development. It threatens the global environment and it demands immediate action on all of the matters affecting it.

For the long term, there must be increasing focus on eco-efficiency. The present century has seen remarkable advances in labour productivity, which has increased, depending on the sectors concerned, by factors of between 20 and 100. The next challenge, for the next century, will be to have comparable increases in natural-resource productivity: we must be conservative in the use of natural resources.

This generation is technologically better equipped than any previous one to advance and accomplish the goal of sustainable development. Well equipped we may be. But we will not accomplish the goal if we continue to sleepwalk through history. It is our task at this special session to give a new dynamic and political momentum to this process and to consolidate and renew the vision of Rio. Let us go forward urgently to complete the work of Agenda 21.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of Ireland for his statement.

Mr. John Bruton, Prime Minister of Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Kim Young Sam, President of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Young Sam, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Kim (*spoke in Korean; English text furnished by the delegation*): It is a great honour for me to speak before this most meaningful special session on the world environment, an issue that affects the habitat of all human beings. As many world leaders have already stated, we humans are facing a crisis of existence due to our reckless devastation of the environment.

Fortunately, however, mankind's awakening gave rise to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development five years ago and to the concept of the sustainable development of the global village, a new paradigm of development that is gradually taking root in our daily lives and in our patterns of production.

Still, the numerous and varied achievements we have made thus far are merely the beginning of the process. As we know from experience, maintaining harmony between development and the preservation of the environment is a very arduous and difficult task. The reality is that the Earth's environment is being continuously destroyed faster than it is being restored. Therefore, world leaders should further solidify their collective political resolve through this special session to work for environmental protection all over the globe.

The Republic of Korea, as a member of the global environmental community, is faithfully and concretely abiding by the Rio Declaration, which represents humanity's commitment to protect the environment through the twenty-first century.

Early last year, I proclaimed a vision for environmental welfare, looking towards the twenty-first century. My Government has adopted a national action programme under Agenda 21 to usher in a new era of sustainable development with the support of the entire nation. With that vision, the Republic of Korea is striving to prevent environmental destruction and increase

investments in environmental technology, while promoting public awareness of environmental issues.

Furthermore, we hope that South Korea and North Korea will cooperate with each other to preserve the natural environment of the demilitarized zone separating the Korean peninsula, turning it into a model zone for peace and ecological integrity on the peninsula. The Republic of Korea is also taking an active part in multinational talks on the environment and in the various negotiations on environmental accords, faithfully fulfilling its share of the obligations.

I believe that the admission of the Republic of Korea to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development last year will provide the momentum needed for a new takeoff in our ongoing efforts for environmental protection.

The environmental degradation of the Earth is an issue that cannot be fundamentally resolved without international cooperation. Especially in this era of globalization, such cooperation should be the top priority of nations in order to make sustainable development possible. Advanced countries must provide financial assistance to developing countries to assist in ensuring sustainable development on a global level. The Government of the Republic of Korea is steadily increasing its assistance to these countries, and will continue actively to assist them in efforts to improve environmental quality.

The international community should give special attention to promoting the transfer of environmental technology, a pivotal task in environmental cooperation. To that end, Korea has made a proposal at the United Nations to expedite the transfer of publicly-owned technologies, and together with United Nations agencies is now seeking ways to implement such transfers.

In view of the crucial importance of regional cooperation in accelerating the construction of a global environmental community, my country intends to push actively for cooperation with countries in North-East Asia and in the Forum of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council.

We in the Republic are acutely wary of the transboundary impact of environmental pollution that could result from ignoring cooperation among countries in the region.

Today at this gathering, I would like to draw the focus of international concern to the issue of the safe management of radioactive waste. In North-East Asia, there is an ongoing attempt to transport a large quantity of nuclear waste from one country to another. Such an attempt contravenes the spirit of the Rio Conference. We believe that this transboundary movement must never be allowed, for the sake of our environmental safety, and we hope that international concern and cooperation will intensify so that the plan will be withdrawn as soon as possible. In this regard, I would like to propose that global and regional mechanisms be established to strengthen cooperation for the safe management of radioactive waste.

During the ceremony held in Seoul on 5 June in observance of World Environment Day, the Seoul Declaration on Environmental Ethics was adopted. I hope the philosophy and ethics of the Seoul Declaration, calling for greater awareness of the environment for the sake of freedom and humanity, will provide a spiritual basis for the deliberations of this special session.

All of us should join hands in developing an affluent Earth of tomorrow in ways exemplified by the Asian respect for all living beings and the Asian emphasis on human coexistence and harmony with nature.

The President: I thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Korea for his statement.

Mr. Kim Young Sam, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Dehaene (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): I wish first to express Belgium's full support for the statement made earlier by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. It seems to us particularly important that the European Union has proposed to this Assembly three specific initiatives — in the areas of water, energy and eco-efficiency — designed to improve the pooling of the international community's efforts to implement sustainable development.

In Rio we adopted Agenda 21, and we are determined to implement it fully in its economic, social, environmental and institutional dimensions. This is a difficult task, for the transition to sustainable development will take at least a generation. However, it is an unavoidable task.

We must now take a step forward from Rio by, to give but one example, beginning the process of negotiation for a global convention on forests. This convention should not be solely an instrument to protect forests, but also to ensure their sustainable use.

The major document for the current negotiations determines priorities for the next five years. It provides both a reference framework and an intergovernmental forum to draw up political responses to the structural crisis now being experienced by our generation.

This framework and forum are all the more indispensable because globalization is placing a very important challenge before us. Globalization undoubtedly has advantages, but it is not an end in itself. What is at stake is the well-being of populations. Globalization must therefore be accompanied by social and environmental measures whose very nature will ensure the continued existence of our common heritage. In this connection, Belgium has always worked at both national and international levels to advocate respect for fundamental and environmental norms in international trade and has also supported the International Labour Organization in this area.

However, no country alone can shape this process of economic globalization to make it more respectful of man and his environment. No nation or region of the globe will be able to implement Agenda 21 outside the framework of a global partnership. We must therefore unite our voices, even if our various countries adopt different priorities.

With regard to priorities, I should like here to recall briefly the four major guidelines for sustainable development championed in particular by Belgium, which are more relevant than ever at all levels.

First of all, we are seeking better integration of the work of sustainable development within the formulation of policies by decompartmentalizing environmental, social and economic policies. The environmental plans for our regions are increasingly marked by a cross-sectoral approach. Moreover, the Belgian Government recently adopted a law allowing a systematic integration of actions, principles and objectives of Agenda 21 within all government policies. This process will be supported by the results of an ambitious, multi-year programme of research in sustainable development, also influenced by Agenda 21.

Secondly, in terms of concerted action by society, we, together with the European Union, stress the need to assist major social groups, including non-governmental organizations, in implementing the plan of action for Agenda 21.

Thirdly, we consider the better coordination of policies and measures between neighbouring countries and commercial partners as a *sine qua non* for the achievement of ambitious sustainable-development objectives, in particular the fulfilment of the commitments of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. This involves the orientation of fiscal policies towards favouring fiscal transfers in order to alleviate the cost of labour, while increasing indirect charges for energy. These policies and measures are indispensable if we are really to attain the objectives that we hope the international community reaches in Kyoto. Belgium will firmly support the 15 per cent reduction of emissions from 1990 levels, as proposed by the European Union.

Finally, the fourth major area for follow-up after Rio is international cooperation and a better focusing of development-assistance policies for the development of the least developed countries. Belgium endorses the earliest possible attainment of the objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance. In addition, Belgium, sensitive to the deterioration and marginalization of the most vulnerable sectors of the population, is focusing its assistance on human development.

In this context, my country is firmly committed to respecting the objective of 0.15 per cent of gross national product for assistance to the least developed countries, particularly in Africa. These are the countries that need it most. We give particular attention to support for the implementation of social-security systems and the advancement of initiatives for social economy.

The choice of economic, social, institutional and environmental indicators is playing a key role in this entire process. The Commission on Sustainable Development of the United Nations has begun an ambitious project to stimulate an international dialogue on the specific utility of these indicators, thanks to support from Costa Rica and Belgium.

The work of 1997 is helping define the substance of sustainable development. Concepts of good governance, social partnership and respect for human rights are linked to the imperative need to struggle against poverty and the need to change patterns of consumption and production. An agreement on all these subjects will allow us to enter the next century with renewed confidence in our shared future.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for his statement.

Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Alemán Lacayo (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have come to this forum, where we are brought together by our shared aspirations for humankind, to bring a warm, fraternal greeting and a message of life and hope from the people and the Government of Nicaragua, a small country with barely 4 million inhabitants. It is a country strategically situated on the watershed of the American continent, between North and South, shaped like a narrow waist where the Atlantic and the Pacific embrace. It is a place of encounters, transit and expectations, as well as of ideological and geopolitical confrontations that have profoundly marked its historical destiny.

Nicaragua has firmly set out on a difficult, upward path in order to leave behind a grim past of destruction and violence, which at the end of the 1970s and throughout the past decade reached their most deplorable. Those were harsh years that tore asunder our fragile social and institutional fabric and produced severe economic turmoil together with ruptures of principles and values.

Our differences were magnified and made more destructive by being internationalized and used by adventitious external factors that entered our domestic existence through the two great watersheds of confrontational interests and ideologies, parallel and concurrent; creating a situation in which our sovereignty and ability to manoeuvre were impeded or nullified. The former occurred because the Nicaraguan problem was turned into a substantive part of the internal political agenda of the United States of America; the latter by virtue of our being situated between the powerful and polarizing tensions of East and West.

It was not until 1990 that Nicaragua began a new journey in the patriotic march towards liberty and democracy by electing President Doña Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, who during the precarious transitional period, laid on uncertain terrain the first stones of national harmony and reconstruction, the first stones of an edifice not yet finished, with much remaining to be done. That edifice was almost completely demolished and needed to be supported by the understanding and help of the international community, which was so generous some years ago.

In October 1996, for the second time in a row, the vote of the people reconfirmed their patriotic aspirations and desire to work in peace by freely electing the Government over which I preside and by giving it a mandate to establish a state of law that promotes comprehensive sustainable development with social justice and whose primary objectives are improved standards of living, job creation and the battle against poverty.

We have the political will to fulfil that commitment. We want Nicaragua to be a constant actor for integration and globalization. We want it to be part of the progressive and restorative trends towards a market economy combining the sensitivity and social responsibility that the modernization of the State entails, with the State playing an additional role of guide, promoter and facilitator, and having the responsibility to protect the environment and the ability to govern through lofty, tolerant, flexible and patriotic dialogue.

In this latter connection, when I return to Nicaragua, we will begin as an immediate priority a national dialogue which will enable us to air our problems and differences in order to find definitive and lasting solutions to the most sensitive structural issues of our national life.

Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda" (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In the framework of this well-defined mission to begin a life in peace — not just among ourselves but also in peace with nature — allow me in my first appearance before the United Nations as the constitutional President of Nicaragua to confirm to the General Assembly our determined commitment to the intensive promotion of sustainable development, as prescribed in Agenda 21,

which was adopted by the United Nations at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

On the fifth of this month, World Environment Day, my Government approved the establishment of the National Council on Sustainable Development (CONADES). This pluralist body, because it is above political differences and potential circumstantial problems, will enjoy the broad-based participation of civil society, including all the main sectors and groups so that together, Government and citizens, we can actively promote the changes and measures to be implemented under Agenda 21.

On that same day — significant in that it marked another positive step to regulate the rational use and preservation of forest resources — I signed the decree that prohibits certain destructive felling practices and the export of our two most precious woods, mahogany and royal cedar, in untreated form.

We will give our enthusiastic support to the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America and join the regional efforts of our brothers and sisters on the isthmus that is our shared continental bridge, unique in the world because of its extraordinary wealth of biological diversity.

We could not continue to stand by and watch as our country was irresponsibly destroyed by the self-destructive process of ecological terrorism that was affecting our finite resources and our habitat, with grave consequences for Nicaraguans of present and future generations.

Briefly, I wish to emphasize that my Government will give special attention to the assessment of the environmental impact of infrastructure projects and public or private investments on problems of pollution, especially with regard to cleaning up Lake Managua. For the initial phase of work, the Inter-American Development Bank, with the cooperation of Germany and the Nordic Development Fund have allocated a sum of $47 million. In addition, the World Bank is very close to formalizing a donation of $7 million, through its provision for financial assistance for Global Environment, for the Atlantic biological-corridor project. Similarly, to provide a framework for our activities, we are planning to update the National Plan for Environmental Action, which was formulated in 1993.

We are concerned by certain conditions we see at the global level. We note that development aid is decreasing and that few countries have met with the objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to such assistance. Nor do we see the developed countries fully respecting the commitments they made at the Rio Summit. New resources are not forthcoming. The transfer of clean technologies is minimal. Their production and consumption patterns, which contribute disproportionately to the deterioration of the Earth, have not been significantly modified. The heavy burden of our foreign debt restricts opportunities for investing in the sustainable development of our countries, while the joint initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund could provide relief for poor countries that are deep in debt.

Finally, allow me sincerely to inform the Assembly that I believe that the most effective way to strengthen democracy in my country is to promote the participation of all citizens in the processes provided for in Agenda 21. Only if we can find consensus between the Government and civil society on the most important ideas and actions can we make progress in a world that is changing so much — we are already on the eve of a new century and a new millennium, and still dragging our burdens behind us.

I have faith. I believe in international solidarity, and I am confident that sustainable development focused on helping the women and men of the world, without distinction, to enjoy progress and increasing material and spiritual dignity is the most viable way to build the future and overcome the problems of the present.

The Acting President: I thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for his statement.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Nena: Five years ago, the delegation of my Government attended the Rio Conference as a new Member of the United Nations. We were, and are, not only a developing country, but a small island developing country. We were greatly inspired by the spirit prevailing at Rio, which seemed to suggest that the global interest in merging environmental and developmental concerns

would serve to cut through the entrenched North-versus-South approach that had so limited the effectiveness of the United Nations. Today, without any intention of demeaning the work that is going on, I would say that the jury is still out as to whether we are really talking about a "new world order" for sustainable development.

Since Rio, virtually the entire United Nations system has been harnessed in the effort to implement Agenda 21, and much has been accomplished. This is due in no small part to the constant leadership of our distinguished President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, starting at Rio, continuing with the Commission on Sustainable Development and now, most fittingly, at this special session. The President has our thanks for his unflagging energy and commitment to this cause.

Also, as this is my first occasion to do so, I would like to extend warm congratulations from the people and the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election. We are aware of his long service to this Organization and take great encouragement from knowing that the Secretariat is in such experienced hands.

Not only has five years been a relatively short time, in global terms, to implement Rio's broad agenda, but for small island developing States, it was not until two years after Rio that the Barbados Conference provided us with a Programme of Action by which our special development constraints might be addressed and, hopefully, overcome. We commend the Commission on Sustainable Development for its mid-term examination of the Programme, carried out at its fourth session, and anticipate that body's further attention to the matter next year at its sixth session. In particular, we look forward to a special session of this Assembly in 1999 at which a full and comprehensive five-year review of the Programme of Action is to be made. I urge this body to adopt the provisions for that session that are included in the proposed outcome of this session.

I have just come from attending a conference in my capital, where Government officials from all over the Pacific convened to share their experiences and problems in advancing sustainable development. It was enlightening to me, and in many ways encouraging, to hear that such a wide diversity of efforts are under way in our region, in addition to our own efforts in the Federated States of Micronesia. I could take up far more than these short seven minutes outlining what we have tried to do in our own country to address sustainable development during the past five years.

We have convened a National Sustainable Development Commission, which I have chaired in regular sessions. We have adapted our indicative development plans at both state and national levels to incorporate the considerations of an overall national environmental management strategy. We have worked closely with United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and especially with regional and subregional organizations. We have participated to the limits of our capacity as a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Our New York Mission has been assigned the main task of working with the Group of 77 and with the Alliance of Small Island States on Rio-related issues, and of closely following the proceedings of the Governing Council of the Global Environment Facility.

Yet my purpose in speaking here today is to say that, from our perspective, this ship is already in serious danger of wandering off course. I put it to you that, from the limited perspective of a small island developing country, the noble inspiration behind Agenda 21 is in danger of being sucked back into the traditional morass of North-South development issues. We in the Pacific are trying our best to do our part, but we find it extremely difficult to access the support from the developed world that is necessary in order for us to structure our development to make solid progress toward sustainability.

The traditional United Nations system has an answer for that. It is called, "capacity building". But I say today that the intellectual rationale behind this concept has been used, whether intentionally or not, as an excuse to delay direct action, thereby marginalizing many of those whose particular global situations deserve closer and more immediate attention and stronger support. My country's capacity is undeniably lacking, given the tremendous responsibility we bear for the protection of resources, and that should be a global concern. Our approach to sustainable development is severely constrained. But thus far we have had to struggle very hard, not because there is any question about how we fit into the world sustainable development scenario, but from the standpoint of our being a new entrant into the highly competitive international development arena. This does not sound much like Rio; rather, it sounds like business as usual. What does this say about the supposedly noble enterprise that we are all assembled here to celebrate?

I suggest that it basically says to the world establishment that we, along with everybody else, need to look at whether we are really still devoted to the principles of Agenda 21, and whether that Agenda really sufficiently drives us into action-oriented approaches that will secure a sustainable future for all the world's peoples. This is not just an appeal from remote Pacific islands for a bigger slice of the pie. It is an appeal from a small island developing State for this body, on this occasion, to send a strong message to United Nations groups that are approaching major decision-making points, such as those relating to our Earth's atmosphere at Kyoto later this year and in other venues as well, and to take a more urgent approach to the relationship between the environment and development than Agenda 21 seems as yet to have stimulated.

We congratulate the countries of the European Union on their announcement of their willingness to undertake a specific commitment, at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by 15 per cent against 1990 levels by 2010 as a first step towards reaching the objective of the Convention. This is a positive development. However, given the ever-increasing scientific certainty of the scope of climate change problems, I must point out that an even greater and more near-term commitment is needed. My country stands with many others, including members of the Alliance of Small Island States, in continuing to believe that the so-called Toronto target of 20 per cent reduction by the year 2005 is both necessary and realistic.

We were gratified by the indication from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom today that his country will come significantly closer — even closer than other European Union countries — to meeting the Toronto target. We also hope that by the time of the opening of the Kyoto meeting, the United States will have overcome its reluctance, displayed in Denver last week, to join the European Union countries in making a specific reduction commitment.

Our situation in Micronesia illustrates this urgency. To cite only one example: rising sea levels and more frequent storms have already resulted in salt water inundation of taro patches on our highly populated atoll of Nukuoro, bringing an end to a vital source of local food. Some smaller atolls in Micronesia have already had to be abandoned because of this difficulty. Thus, even island peoples who might seem comfortably removed from many of the Earth's problems have vital stakes in the actions that must be taken by other nations that are primarily responsible for these problems.

The principles of sustainability are not foreign to our Pacific islands. We sustained ourselves for centuries on our islands without thinking much about the modern concept of the environment but that involved a basic respect for the life which supported us. As we take our place in modern society we must employ modern applications, but the fact remains that island peoples of today are often better positioned than most to understand the principles of sustainability. All of you, along with us, as occupants of this planet, must listen to the quiet message that we, as stewards of some the Earth's most vital resources, bring to this debate today. Help us — help all of us, including yourselves — to see that the legacy of Rio is not lost.

The Acting President: I thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for his statement.

Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Ishembay Abdurazakov, Vice-President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Ishembay Abdurazakov, Vice-President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Abdurazakov (Kyrgyz Republic) (*interpretation from Russian*): Precisely five years have elapsed since the United Nations Conference in Rio, the significance of which is difficult to overestimate. The Conference reaffirmed that socio-economic development and environmental protection are closely interlinked and interdependent. The Conference demonstrated that new global economic threats, damage to the ozone layer, changes in the global climate, deforestation, reduced biodiversity, the contamination of the atmosphere by industrial and radioactive wastes, desertification, the reduction of arable land and other problems have become more acute and that their solution brooks no delay.

It was also important that States participants in the Conference emphasized that a solution to problems of the environment and development requires the establishment of a global partnership on the basis of continued and constructive dialogue.

The five years that have elapsed since the Rio Conference have shown us that, unfortunately, many objectives have not been achieved and many programmes have not been implemented. There are areas, however,

where some progress has been achieved. One such area is addressed in Chapter 13 of Agenda 21: "Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development". It must be noted that, in the field of enhancing awareness of the "mountain agenda", it has been possible to achieve significant progress. This has been helped by international, interregional, subregional and other conferences, seminars and symposia.

I am pleased to note here that one such international conference took place in October 1996 in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek. In attaching the highest importance to the role of mountains for humanity, the conference proposed that the General Assembly declare an international year of the mountains. This request was supported by the President of our Republic, Mr. Askar Akayev. I should like to voice the hope that this request will meet with a response from Governments, non-governmental organizations, various regional and subregional initiatives and countries parties to the Alpine Convention.

Why is this question so important? Judge for yourselves. Mountains account for one fifth of all dry land. The glaciers on mountain peaks are the most important source of fresh water. A lack of water, along with a lack of other natural resources, leads to increased poverty, the intensification of social discrepancies, the growth of inter-ethnic tensions and, ultimately, the emergence of armed conflicts. It is no coincidence that, of the 48 armed conflicts that took place in 1995, 26 took place in mountain regions.

Mountains are places often fraught with ecological risks and natural disasters. Every year, earthquakes, avalanches, landslides and mud torrents not only do major damage to the economies of mountainous regions, but take thousands of human lives. On the other hand, mountains also provide superb opportunities for the development of tourism, skiing, mountain climbing and hunting.

The "mountain agenda" allowed us significantly to enhance our awareness of vulnerable mountain systems. We believe that the holding, in accordance with the recommendations of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, of an expanded international conference on the question of the sustainable development of mountain regions would promote a more in-depth study and understanding of the entire broad range of issues involved in this problem.

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic attaches enormous importance to questions of ecology. The President and Government of my country have adopted a new development programme as a guideline, the focus of which is humanity and the natural and social environments that surround it. To live in harmony in nature: this is the task before us. In May this year, a national forum took place in Kyrgyzstan in which the first strategy for sustainable human development in the Commonwealth of Independent States was adopted. The most important elements of the strategy, which was supported by all strata of the population of the Republic, non-governmental organizations and ethnic and religious groups, are overcoming poverty, enhancing the role and position of women in society, and decision-making and environmental protection mechanisms.

We intend to give these documents to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his information. Today, I am gratified to report that, at this time, in parallel to the special session of the General Assembly, preparations are under way in our capital for a meeting of the Security Council of Kyrgyzstan, headed by President Akayev, to consider the entire range of issues linked to ecological security and problems of environmental protection.

Mountains cover 90 per cent of the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Glaciers on the hundreds of thousands of peaks of the Pamir and Tyan Shan ranges give life to the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, the major water arteries of the Aral Sea, the tragedy of which was addressed today by the President of Kazakstan, Mr. Nazarbaev. Possessing enormous water and hydro-energy resources, the mountains of Kyrgyzstan are truly the ecological heart of Central Asia. Each of their heartbeats gives life to the fields, forests and people. If that heart is to continue to beat, however, it needs a cautious attitude to its health. There is a need to draft appropriate legislation and policies to ensure the effective and fair distribution and use of water resources in the Central Asian region. We hope and are sure that considerable assistance to that effect could be rendered by the United Nations.

I should like to draw attention to one further question of great importance to us. On the territory of Kyrgyzstan, there are 28 storage facilities for uranium waste, a legacy from the former Soviet Union. Among the issues connected to radioactive wastes in Chapter 22 of Agenda 21, a major role is accorded to international cooperation, in particular with countries with economies in transition. Here, we would be grateful if the International Atomic Energy Agency were to consider the possibility of including Kyrgyzstan in its ecological restoration programme.

The past five years have been characterized by a deterioration of the global environment and by an exhaustion of natural resources. Does this mean that we need to give up on achieving the objectives of Agenda 21? According to folk wisdom, "He who climbs the mountain will master the road". Only a bold and persistent person conquers mountain peaks, and only persistent joint efforts and the sharing of resources will lead to the implementation of that ambitious Agenda 21 for the twenty-first century, on whose threshold we are standing.

We received a globe from our ancestors, but let us not blame them for the state it is in today. Let us not try to settle scores, because that is pointless. Let us rather try to draw lessons from the past and see to it that each following generation receives from the previous one a healthy, not a deteriorating, environment. They have that right.

It is our duty to show concern for those who come after us. I think that this is a task with which we can cope. It is one with which the international community can cope, and I hope that that will be the case.

The Acting President: I thank His Excellency the Vice-President of the Kyrgyz Republic for his statement.

Mr. Ishembay Abdurazakov, Vice-President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Julia Carabias, Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries of Mexico.

Ms. Julia Carabias, Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries of Mexico, was escorted to the rostrum.

Ms. Carabias (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The principles, commitments and agreements adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as has already been pointed out here in this forum, have not sufficed to curb, much less to reverse, the trends towards deterioration and impoverishment, although they have produced certain advances.

This special session is of great importance because the presence of the Heads of State or Government reaffirms the principles of sustainable development and the commitments of Agenda 21. We are given today a fresh opportunity to reflect, to intensify our efforts and to strengthen commitments.

In the negotiations regarding different aspects of sustainable development, the polarization between the developed and developing countries has remained intact. The former have undertaken binding commitments whose implementation has at times tended to be evaded or postponed, and the latter are experiencing a growing tension due to the scope of the transformation that is required by sustainable development and their limited capacity to accomplish this change.

Mexico reaffirms the value of the principle, recognized at Rio, of common but differentiated responsibility, which we interpret as the obligation of all countries to make the maximum effort at change within the limits of their ability, on the basis of their dynamic environmental, economic and social circumstances.

The developed countries must meet the expectations generated by their capacities and understand that a global transition towards sustainable development will be possible only if they lead the global effort by their example. We were pleased to hear in this forum some developed countries reaffirm their commitments.

Some developing countries, even in the face of limited financial resources, have achieved substantial progress by institutional, legal and regulatory reform, or through a better design and integration of sectoral and trans-sectoral policies. We must continue to take advantage of the enormous transforming power of organizational changes brought about by a genuine openness to social participation, which will allow the mobilization of resources that are currently wasted.

In the United Nations system, while recognizing the advances made, we must identify the major obstacles that stand in the way of smoother progress, starting with insufficient international cooperation, the fragmentation of current agendas and a lack of coordination.

The Economic and Social Council and, more recently, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) have contributed to the coordination of efforts, but a great deal still remains to be done. In practice, the CSD has thus far been able to deal only with forums related to environmental issues, though its mandate includes also the economic and social dimensions. For that reason, CSD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) would seem to have the same sphere of action. And UNEP, which we recognize as the primary global environmental forum, has not been able either to integrate the multiple environmental actions and agendas.

The Conventions have not yet achieved sufficient synergy among themselves and with established programmes and agencies. We have seen gaps in some of the thematic agendas, where the main orientation has been lost; this applies to the Convention on Biological Diversity, where we are not discussing the central issue — *in situ* conservation — enough. Lack of compliance by the developed countries with their commitments further undermines their effectiveness, as we have seen in the case of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We are undoubtedly at the end of a stage in international cooperation that has been characterized by a link between specific issues and ad hoc institutions, between problems and negotiated instruments and between the latter and their respective conferences of the parties. We must promote a new generation of cooperation mechanisms designed with a view to the integration of issues, regionalization and participation.

The CSD must fully integrate social, economic and environmental considerations. UNEP must integrate land-based environmental issues with oceanic and atmospheric issues. These efforts at thematic integration must work in parallel with regionalization, such as those that are already being attempted in certain United Nations bodies — UNEP, for instance. To promote these regional agendas in a comprehensive manner, we need to increase and integrate currently scattered financial resources.

In order to confront this enormous task, there must be increased participation by independent organizations, on the understanding that the achievement of sustainability, both at the national and global levels, is the joint responsibility of Governments and societies.

A revitalized CSD, supported by a strengthened UNEP, that provides follow-up for Agenda 21, avoids duplication of efforts, detects omissions and facilitates dialogue among countries could be the seed and the prototype of the new generation of mechanisms we need in order to encourage sustainable development and contribute to the eradication of poverty.

This determination to integrate, to decentralize and to enhance participation can foster reform in the United Nations system, strengthen its efficiency and overcome years of polarization. But none of this should in any way impede ongoing processes of negotiation. We must on an urgent basis make progress by defining strategies, priorities, specific qualitative or quantitative goals, the necessary resources, time-tables, objective performance indicators, and evaluation and follow-up mechanisms.

In reaffirming its commitments, Mexico also reaffirms its will to progress, together with the international community, towards the fulfilment of the objectives we set for ourselves at that historic gathering in Rio.

The Acting President: I thank Her Excellency the Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries of Mexico for her statement.

Ms. Julia Carabias, Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries of Mexico, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Mehdi Mlika, Minister of the Environment and Land Management of Tunisia.

Mr. Mohamed Mehdi Mlika, Minister of the Environment and Land Management of Tunisia, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Mehdi Mlika (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the President of the Republic of Tunisia.

I have great pleasure in addressing the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on behalf of the Government and the people of Tunisia, and to extend my greetings to the leaders and other high officials of the countries taking part in this session.

As we meet today to evaluate international activities to preserve the environment over the five years since the Rio de Janeiro Conference, we express the hope that this session will lead to the fulfilment of the commitments that were made in this regard. United Nations experts have shown that there is still a wide gap between the discourse of Governments and international institutions regarding the improvement of the world's environment and the realities of our planet Earth, whose condition is daily worsening.

Tunisia has spared no effort to fulfil its responsibilities and thus to make an earnest and effective contribution to preserving the environment on the national, regional and international levels, in conformity with the decisions adopted at the Rio Conference and the provisions of Agenda 21. Our country has ratified all the

international conventions that have been concluded in this sphere, including those that address the prohibition of nuclear testing, the protection of the marine environment from pollution by hydrocarbons, the prohibition of trade in endangered species, and the protection of the Mediterranean and of wetlands. Tunisia has also ratified the Conventions that came out of the Rio Conference on biological diversity and climate change, and the Convention to combat desertification, the enforcement of which is hindered by a lack of financial resources and of suitable mechanisms for cooperation.

We have set up a national commission for sustainable development, grouping all development sectors, and through it we have adopted Tunisia's Local Agenda 21, involving all social partners in this effort and opting for concerted action and national dialogue. This coherent programme is one of the foundations of our country's ninth plan for economic and social development, and confirms the complementarity between national and local efforts in this domain.

We also have particular concern for strengthening specialized environmental protection structures and for enacting relevant laws. We have instituted a Tunisian environmental observatory, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, and have created an Agency for Coastal Development and Protection and an International Centre for Environmental Technology in Tunis, which we intend as a regional centre of influence and an instrument for complementary action among sister countries and other friendly countries.

Our country has introduced the financial and tax incentives necessary to eliminate pollution and to support non-polluting investment, alongside a number of other mechanisms aimed at ensuring an environment that is healthy for economic activity and for life in general. Added to all this is the revision of numerous laws to adapt them to the requirements of sustainable development, and the enactment of new laws, including one creating a national plan for rapid intervention in the event of maritime pollution, and a framework law pertaining to the control, management and disposal of waste.

In June 1993, we called for the holding of a Mediterranean conference on sustainable development and for the drafting of a Mediterranean Agenda 21. The Euro-Mediterranean conference of ministers held at Tunis in this framework made it possible to prepare a Mediterranean Agenda 21 and to set up a Mediterranean commission for sustainable development, providing an opportunity to revise the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution, and to develop a regional action plan.

Tunisia is working resolutely for the establishment of active solidarity among the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean and the European Union to protect the natural environment and to ensure that those living in this region of the world enjoy the conditions needed for a better quality of life.

The right to a healthy environment is a fundamental human right on the basis of which we in Tunisia have built our plan for society and our political programme. For this reason we are eager to use all the means and skills at our disposal to support international efforts in this regard, for it is certain that success cannot be achieved without unified cooperation among States. Nor can it be attained without the active contribution of the affluent countries.

It is our hope that this special session will be the occasion for a more thorough study of the practical means and mechanisms for revitalizing effective partnership and for mobilizing new financial resources to support programmes of sustainable development in developing countries, in accordance with the commitments made at the Rio summit, particularly with respect to the official development assistance that should be provided to the less developed countries and to those with medium-level revenues. While stressing this point, we also emphasize the need promote partnership in scientific research and the transfer of the latest environmental technology, so as to strengthen the capabilities of the developing countries in this vital sphere.

To address the problem of the indebtedness of developing countries is to contribute to strengthening the effort for environmental protection. We have underscored this in our appeal to the wealthy countries to recycle the debt into financing projects for environmental protection, with the objective of promoting sustainable development in various regions.

We take this opportunity to thank the Governments of Sweden and of the Netherlands for responding favourably to Tunisia's appeal regarding recycling of the debt. We wish also to thank the Government of Germany for its major participation in financing environmental projects in my country. This has opened the way for international solidarity and partnership in favour of the

environment. It is our hope that the other affluent countries will do the same.

We reaffirm here our view that action for a healthy environment is an essential duty for all, a duty which is imposed by the interaction of the individual and the universe and which places the human being above all other creatures. We wish this session every success in advancing the international community's progress in this field.

The Acting President: I thank His Excellency the Minister of the Environment and Land Management of Tunisia for his statement.

Mr. Mohamed Mehdi Mlika, Minister of the Environment and Land Management of Tunisia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Cielito F. Habito, Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Cielito F. Habito, Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning of the Philippines, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Habito (Philippines): In September 1992, barely two months after the historic Earth Summit in Rio, the then newly elected Philippine President, Fidel V. Ramos, created the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development, thereby delivering the swiftest response by any country to the call made in Rio for States to set up a national coordination structure responsible for the follow up of Agenda 21.

Less than four years later, in May 1996, *Newsweek* magazine referred to the Philippines as an emerging "green tiger", at a time when the country was being held up consistently in many international circles as an example, as a leader, in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Allow me to share some of the reasons why we may have merited such recognition.

Today, five years after Rio, the Philippines is one among only a small number of countries with a genuine multi-stakeholder council for sustainable development, a council that asserts full partnership between government and civil society. The initial years were not easy. The road we took was a tortuous, sometimes frustrating one that seemed overly dominated by organizational and operational concerns.

We took time to achieve a levelling of perspectives, paradigms, expectations and mindsets among the governmental members and the civil society members of the council. Indeed, the gap between us at the outset was rather wide. Our first order of business was to instil in ourselves trust in each other and, in turn, to work to merit each other's trust. We spent time agreeing on protocols for agenda setting and decision-making, until we finally agreed to be guided by the principles of counter-parting and consensus-building in all that we work on.

We gave time to forging mechanisms for funding our sustainable development efforts, and in the process made history by putting in place the first World Bank project that provided resources directly to our non-governmental organizations working to protect Philippine natural resources. It turned out to have been time well spent. These initial preoccupations did not prevent us from proceeding with the real work that had to be done right on the ground.

We improved the policy and regulatory framework for the environmental impact assessment and environmental clearance system in our country. We undertook environmental and natural resource accounting and adopted it officially as part of our system of national accounts, one of the first countries in the world to do so.

We formulated our own Philippine Agenda 21, formally adopted in September 1996, and put in place the regional and local counterparts of the national council and the national agenda on sustainable development.

Through all these measures, our people at the grass roots worked to bring meaning to the now almost trite phrase "think globally, act locally". In our island province of Palawan, for example, the programme *Bantay Puerto*, loosely translated as "Guardians of the City", was put up and involved the city government and the citizens working together to guard the sea, the coast and the forest against pollution and environmental degradation. In the San Miguel Corporation, the country's largest food conglomerate, unionists incorporated environmental responsibilities into their collective bargaining agreements between labour and management.

In the meanwhile, much was happening on the economic front. The strategy of President Ramos to open up the economy and maximize competition unleashed a new dynamism in the national economy, manifested in the consistently accelerating growth of the Philippine gross domestic product for six years now, even as the growth

of our dynamic neighbours in south-east Asia has begun to slow down.

Even so, our growth strides are being taken in measured steps, for even as we welcomed unprecedented interest from both domestic and foreign investors, we turned away some investments and shut down some ongoing production facilities for the sake of safeguarding the environment. Even as we lined up new and strategic infrastructure projects, we held in abeyance a good number of them, in the process incurring criticism for slowness or delays, until we were convinced that we were keeping things clean as we grow. We do not want to follow the grow now/clean up later formula seemingly taken by others who preceded us, including the so-called "economic tigers".

Those of us who share the sustainable development philosophy understand that we prefer to proceed with caution and moderation, and that we are trying to nurture a young tiger in the woods and are committed to preserving the health of the woods in which this tiger is growing.

I say all this about our national efforts not to flatter ourselves in this forum, nor to solicit premature praises for our country, for we will be the first to admit that there remains much more to be done and that the state of our environment still leaves a great deal to be desired. We share with you our experiences today because we feel that there is much that the rest of the world may learn from them.

Sustainable development is not something that Governments or international bodies do to people. Sustainable development is something people do for themselves and for their children. It is not something that a Government can accomplish alone, nor is it something that civil society can achieve in spite of the Government. Sustainable development is something that can only be achieved through the Government and civil society working together, not just in consultation with each other, but in a real working partnership. The first step, as I emphasized at the outset, is to have trust; and not only that, but for both parties to work to merit each other's trust.

In the various conferences that came after the Rio Earth Summit, we have witnessed the reluctance of some Governments to ascribe a partnership role to civil society. In the Rio + 5 meeting just a few months ago, which was dominated by representatives of civil society, we witnessed persistent government-bashing from the speakers in that forum.

Many concrete recommendations have been made before this and similar forums in the five years since the Rio Earth Summit. Most of them, including those made in Rio itself, remain just that, mere recommendations. We submit that, unless Governments decide to work directly and together with civil society, and unless civil society decides to engage Governments as partners in this endeavour, little, if any, progress will be made on Agenda 21.

For Governments, the first step is to extend sincerely an open hand. For civil society, in turn, it is to take hold sincerely of that hand. Without this partnership any effort towards sustainable development simply cannot be sustained and will eventually fail.

We are proud that we are making this partnership work in the Philippines for the sake of sustainable development. This is the new Asian miracle that the Philippines would like to share with the world.

The Acting President: I thank the Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning and Director-General of the National Development Authority of the Philippines, for his statement.

Mr. Cielito F. Habito, Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning and Director-General of the National Development Authority of the Philippines, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear now a statement by His Excellency Mr. Pierre Schori, Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden.

Mr. Pierre Schori, Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): All over the world millions of people give substance to the concept of sustainable development. An unprecedented world-wide effort from civil society drives the Rio process forward. This places a heavy obligation on the Governments present here today.

Twenty-five years after Stockholm, ten years after the Brundtland Commission and five years after Rio, we are far from having secured sustainable development. Yet, never before have so many people taken the step out of poverty. Never before have so many taken control of their

lives. Never before have so many nations made such progress towards establishing democratic cultures. Therein lies our hope.

But never before have so many children been born into poverty. Never before have inequalities been so glaring between and within nations. Therein lies our challenge.

In my country, all 288 municipalities are working on local Agenda 21 plans. From children in schools to public and private sectors of community life, everyone is involved.

As a gift from the Swedish Agenda 21 Netwo k, we would like to offer the United Nations a symbol of our commitment bearing the names of all the Swedish municipalities.

This spring the Government of Sweden launched a comprehensive programme to support sustainable investments and technical development in Sweden. We also expect this to create new jobs, support economic growth and improve the competitiveness of Swedish business.

An improved environment and sustainable development are also regional issues. The Governments of the countries around the Baltic Sea, not so long ago locked in sterile confrontation on either side of the Iron Curtain, have now launched a project that will soon result in a regional Agenda 21 — the Baltic 21.

Poverty is the main enemy of peace and development today. Liberation from poverty can only be the work of the poor themselves. But the struggle of poor people and developing nations must be supported by a strong international system, with a renewed United Nations at the centre and with new and additional resources at its disposal.

Today, we are further away from the 0.7 per cent target than ever. Global trade and private investment flows cannot, on their own, achieve a stable world. Development assistance can never, on its own, be the full answer, but all experience shows that in the right environment, it is indispensable.

Now tha' Sweden's public finances are in shape again, the Government has decided to increase our aid above the 0.7 per cent level.

To further spearhead work to the benefit of the least developed countries in the field of fresh water and energy, Sweden will set aside another $10 million, with a special focus on women.

Military activities, as we know, cause environmental degradation, both in peace and in war. Sweden would like to see a more thorough follow-up by responsible authorities in accordance with decisions taken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, for instance, by developing environmental plans for national defence, as we do in Sweden.

Consumption and production must be sustainable. The industrialized countries have a clear responsibility and must take the lead. Greater use of economic instruments can enable us to improve eco-efficiency. This goes for everything — from cans to cars, from radios to refrigerators. In the long run, we need to make the use of energy and resources 10 times more efficient than today for the same volume of production. This is the vision of the "Factor 10" initiative.

We will not succeed in the tasks that we set ourselves at the Earth Summit in Rio unless we radically improve the way we cooperate in the world.

The coming millennium milestone offers a unique opportunity. Sweden therefore asks the Secretary-General to elaborate a report with respect to strategies for a sustainable future. In preparing such a document, contributions from all parts of society and the international system should be sought, including civil society, business and the academic world. This report would be considered at the highest possible level by the General Assembly in the year 2000.

It is today that we must find solutions for coming generations.

The Acting President: I thank the Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden for his statement.

Mr. Pierre Schori, Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Senator The Honourable Robert Hill, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for the Environment of Australia.

Senator The Honourable Robert Hill, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for the Environment of Australia, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Five years on from Rio, this special session of the United Nations General Assembly is an opportunity to evaluate frankly how effective we have been in implementing sustainable-development principles.

An honest evaluation of our performance will recognize that progress has been inadequate in several key areas. Poverty in the least developed world continues to be the greatest challenge to sustainable development. We have lost a further 3.5 per cent of our forests. Desertification continues at an alarming rate. Pollution of our air and our freshwater and ocean resources has increased, and we are struggling to protect biodiversity in the face of a potential wave of extinctions of species.

However, the significance of having achieved international consensus on the broad principles of sustainable development and on the need for action should not be understated. Nor should we fail to recognize the enormous changes that are occurring: the extent to which sustainable development principles have been incorporated into government and agency decision-making processes and the practical improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions this has brought in many countries.

Unfortunately, these successes have been partial and limited. Overall, we have not yet been able adequately to translate the conceptual framework into the necessary outcomes on the ground.

In Australia, we have recognized the need for action and have commenced implementation of a historic national programme to promote sustainable development. We have established a fund with 1.2 billion Australian dollars, which is the largest reinvestment in the environment in our country's history. The complementary goals of the Natural Heritage Trust, as we call it, are to protect Australia's biodiversity and ensure sustainable use of our land and waters.

However, action at the national level is a necessary but not sufficient condition for sustainable development. All of our futures are bound together, and it is only with a common will, with a common purpose and through common action that, together, we can secure a prosperous and sustainable future for our children and their children.

Australia recognizes that the action which must be taken to achieve sustainable development will require a significant investment. Aid has an important role to play in supporting national actions to alleviate poverty and implement sustainable development. However,it must also act as a catalyst to help nations adopt economic and social policies that facilitate private investment and trade flows. Social stability rooted in democratic freedoms and sound governance is also critical to the confidence that underpins investment in physical and human capital. These are the long-term building blocks of sustainable development.

The role of economic policy is also particularly important in promoting sustainable development. Greater reliance must be placed on economic instruments and policies that internalize environmental costs and discourage unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

I wanted to deal with a few of the very topical and important issues, and the first is climate change.

We have a responsibility to provide an effective, durable and truly global response to this significant issue. We must move beyond words to produce an agreement which is realistic, fair and achievable. In Australia's view, an agreement needs to meet these three criteria if it is to deliver environmentally effective outcomes.

A regime under which emission-reduction targets are unattainable or under which individuals in different nations are asked to make dramatically different sacrifices is likely to be both unfair and ineffective. Flat-rate targets would place unfair burdens on a number of countries, including Australia. Similarly, Australia believes that agreeing to legally binding targets before their nature and content are clear would be premature.

My Government's view is that an effective agreement on climate change would be given practical expression through differentiation of country commitments. The Kyoto agreement must provide that each country's particular circumstances, economic costs and available opportunities to limit emissions be taken into account in determining an equitable target for each participating State.

Australia is working actively and constructively in the negotiations. We have submitted proposals for differentiating greenhouse-gas-emission targets to ensure there is an equality of effort between Annex I countries.

We are seeking an outcome under which each country will be able to contribute to the fight against global warming in a way which is fair and effective and realistically takes national circumstances into account.

Secondly, promoting the sustainable use of forest resources and the conservation of forests — especially forest biodiversity — must be a major priority over the next five years. We are not yet convinced that a convention is required. At this stage, we would prefer urgent implementation of the indicative planning figure recommendations, which would produce positive outcomes. Australia supports the establishment of a high-level intergovernmental forum to implement the proposals of the indicative planning figure. Such a forum could also consider the need for a convention in due course.

Thirdly, the need to achieve sustainable use of our ocean resources is also a key priority. At present, management of ocean resources is characterized by a fragmented and inefficient approach. There is a desperate need for greater coordination of the instruments and institutions dealing with the management of our oceans. Management arrangements with a regional focus should be encouraged. Australia is currently hosting the secretariat for the International Coral Reef Initiative, and is playing a major role in other forums designed to promote the protection and sustainable use of ocean resources in our region.

We have also commenced the development of a national oceans policy, which will provide a framework for the management of Australia's fisheries, shipping, petroleum, gas and seabed resources. It will do this in a way that will not only conserve and protect our marine environment, but also allow us to derive sustainable economic benefits from our oceans. We would urge all national Governments to look at developing similar marine or ocean policies in accordance with their particular circumstances.

Fourthly, a dramatic improvement in our management of fresh water is essential in order to sustain human populations and the ecological systems so critical to life on our planet. Effective international action and, especially, regional action are required, in particular to promote integrated catchment management for river systems covering several jurisdictions. As the only country in the world with exclusive responsibility for the freshwater resources of an entire continent, and as the driest inhabited continent, Australia understands the vulnerability of environmental flows. We have learned the painful lessons about the need to manage freshwater resources sustainably. Ironically, our past mistakes put us in a good position to provide water technology and catchment management expertise to help other nations address freshwater issues.

Fifthly and lastly, with regard to sustainable cities, one thing we have learnt is that close cooperation between national and municipal government is critical to successfully translating national environmental policies into action, particularly on the ground. Earlier this month, Australia was proud to host the "Pathways to Sustainability" conference, which focused on the global progress of municipal governments in implementing local Agenda 21 programmes and brought together many international leaders in local sustainable development. The outcomes of that conference are reflected in the Newcastle Declaration, named after the Australian city where the conference took place.

I commend to the General Assembly the general thrust of the Declaration, and hope that international organizations and national Governments will in future work more effectively with municipal government to deliver sustainable outcomes at a community level. If they do so, we will be making major strides in the challenge of achieving sustainable cities.

The Rio Conference was a turning point in the agenda of international cooperation. Sustainable development is now one of the dominant issues for the international community, alongside such long-established concerns as global security, human rights and international trade. Now is the time for decisive action. The emphasis must shift from process to outcome. The conceptual framework now needs to be translated into practical implementation of sustainable development. With this in mind, Australia reaffirms its commitment to the principles established at Rio and signals its continued determination to contribute to the realization of sustainable development.

The Acting President: I thank Senator The Honourable Robert Hill, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for the Environment of Australia for his statement.

Senator The Honourable Robert Hill, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for the Environment of Australia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luciano Ciavatta, Minister for Territory, the Environment and Agriculture of San Marino.

Mr. Luciano Ciavatta, Minister for Territory, the Environment and Agriculture of San Marino was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Ciavatta (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*): On this significant occasion, the Republic of San Marino wishes to reiterate its full commitment to the principles spelt out at the World Summit on environment and development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. We believe that that was a historic event.

That event saw the establishment of the new global cooperation among States, brought together by the common objective of paving the way to sustainable development, in which environmental protection and long-term socio-economic development are to be considered compatible, complementary and interdependent. The solution to environmental issues demands resources that only economic development can supply, since socio-economic growth is bound to decline if the well-being of humankind and natural resources are severely damaged by environmental degradation.

The initiatives undertaken, and the results of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, where the concept of sustainable development was first introduced, and of the 1992 Rio Conference, represent significant achievements worldwide. Our endeavours, however, need further strengthening in the future. Today, the international community, national organizations, the industrial and economic world and individuals are more aware of and willing to participate in environmental activities. At the same time, it has become apparent that society and the economy cannot thrive in a world stricken by poverty and degradation.

In many instances, world leaders shared the view that market globalization, economic growth and the needs of modern society must take into account the environmental constraints which are the basis of our ecosystem. Halting human development is inconceivable, but development must be less destructive and more responsible. The main cause of increased environmental degradation can be ascribed to unacceptable production and consumption patterns. Hence, it is imperative to give new life to the concept of new production modes, reducing the exploitation of natural resources, the production of toxic waste and pollution. Meeting the needs of present generations must not damage opportunities for future generations.

Unfortunately, the situation is quite different. In many regions of the world, poverty and hunger are worsening, the gulf between rich and poor nations is widening, and environmental degradation and depletion of resources are almost beyond repair. Our task here in New York is to assess carefully the implementation stage of the commitments undertaken in Rio and above all, I believe, to act in such a way as to reconcile future economic development, social justice and the preservation of nature.

The Government I represent reaffirms today the viability of the important documents adopted in Rio. The Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and the statement on forest principles call for action and are of vital importance now more than ever.

Despite its limited territorial size of only a few square kilometres and its limited impact on the world economy, San Marino is well aware of the threats and repercussions of the damage caused to our common ecosystem and intends to share its experience with larger countries.

On behalf of my Government, I am proud to affirm that the population of San Marino has become more sensitive to environmental issues. Our real economy is well developed and many of the problems affecting other populations in the world have been tackled and overcome, while many of the local commitments of Agenda 21 are being considered.

The small size of the country allows close relations between the community and its institutions — a key element for promoting the debate on environmental issues and increasing participation by all groups of society. The Government has adopted significant measures with regard to urbanization and ecology and is making greater efforts to integrate environmental considerations into the formulation of its policies in the light of its characteristics and the quality of life of its inhabitants. In particular, the Framework Law for the Protection of the Environment and the Safeguarding of the Landscape, whose aim is to enhance the cultural and natural landscape of the Republic, has proven to be important.

For the purpose of educating the population on environmental themes, the Government is defining a project for environmental protection and safeguarding the territory through the involvement of students of all levels. The intention is to teach younger generations how to exploit natural resources in a responsible and rational way and to show them the correct mechanisms regulating the relationship between man and nature. Under this project, pupils and students are to carry out regular surveys during the school year in order to assess the environmental quality of the green areas.

On this occasion, I wish to stress, as stated in Agenda 21, the fundamental nature of active cooperation with non-governmental organizations, represented in San Marino by associations and committees for the protection of environment. Besides guaranteeing the dissemination of information, monitoring the activity of the Government in this field and contributing to educational projects, these groups should be reliable counterparts of the official institutions. The ultimate objective is for the various socio-economic sectors to accept the principle of interdependence which underlies the concept of sustainable development.

As I have already said, San Marino is a small State proud of its long-standing traditions of solidarity, freedom and democracy. The themes addressed in Agenda 21 emphasize these same values and show a common will and shared determination. San Marino intends to play its role in the implementation of this far-reaching plan, prompted by the conviction that it will ultimately lead to the achievement of global democracy.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister for Territory, the Environment and Agriculture of San Marino for his statement.

Mr. Luciano Ciavatta, Minister for Territory, the Environment and Agriculture of San Marino, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Song Jian, State Counsellor of China.

Mr. Song Jian, State Counsellor of China, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Song Jian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Five years after the Rio Earth Summit, it is very important and significant that leaders from all over the world or meeting once again to review the past and plan for the future. The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the issue of environment and development. Since the early 1980s, China has made environmental protection one of its basic State policies. With a high sense of responsibility to future generations and the international community, China has earnestly honoured the commitments solemnly made with other countries at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

I am glad to report to this Assembly that, while registering rapid economic growth in recent years, China has avoided drastic environmental degradation and even registered some partial improvement in the nation's environment. Following UNCED's lead, China formulated its own Agenda 21 — the White Paper on China's Population, Environment and Development in the Twenty-First Century — and has incorporated the strategy of sustainable development into its National Economic and Social Development Programme. It has encouraged extensive public participation, set up a mechanism of institutional guarantees, engaged extensively in international cooperation, and made notable progress in environmental protection as well as in economic and social development.

In recent years, China's gross national product has been growing at a relatively high annual rate and the sector of the population living in poverty has declined from 80 million in the early 1990s to 58 million at present. Rapid population growth has been brought under control and the nation's natural population growth rate has dropped steadily.

Notable achievements have been made in the comprehensive exploitation of resources by promoting their conservation and relying on scientific and technological progress. Efforts have been made to promote clean production processes and the transformation of the industrial growth mode. The increase in discharged pollutants has been effectively curbed by the shut-down of more than 60,000 enterprises causing serious pollution.

More attention has been paid to forest cultivation and the nationwide voluntary reforestation drive. Forest coverage has increased steadily. Greater efforts have been devoted to preserving biodiversity. A network of nature reserves has taken basic shape, covering 7.2 per cent of China's land territory. Most of the endangered species are being effectively protected.

These goals were achieved independently by the Chinese people and Government, mainly through their own efforts. China's active participation in international cooperation and its efforts to seek international support also played an important part in this process.

Though we are keenly aware that China still faces formidable challenges in achieving sustainable development, we are convinced that if all the Chinese people work hard together, implement decisively a sustainable development strategy and participate actively in international cooperation, we can continue the sustainable development of our national economy, provide adequate food and clothing for the poor and achieve zero population growth by the year 2030, all the while doing a good job of protecting the environment. China will contribute significantly to global environmental protection and economic development through the smooth functioning of its own affairs.

Five years ago, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) adopted for the first time a programme of sustainable development and affirmed the principles governing international environment and development cooperation. These represent the indelible contribution made by UNCED in Rio.

In the past five years, the international community has logged notable achievements in implementing the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21. The concept of sustainable development has begun to take root in people's minds and has become the guiding principle for countries in the formulation of their development strategies. The developing countries have overcome difficulties and worked very hard to make some progress, and the international community has carried out some useful experiments on financing mechanisms in an effort to explore and broaden new avenues to make such cooperation multi-channelled and rich in content.

However, there remains a considerable gap between what has been done and what remains to be done. One important condition for progress in international environment and development cooperation is the provision of financial resources and the transfer of technology to developing countries. But the percentage of gross national product that the developed world is allocating to official development assistance has dropped to its lowest level in 25 years. Moreover, some developed countries are engaging in trade protectionism under the pretext of environmental protection, which has a negative impact on the sustainable development of developing countries.

In the course of implementing Agenda 21, new imbalances have emerged. More emphasis is being placed on the environment and less on development; sectoral rather than cross-sectoral issues are being stressed; and international cooperation is insufficient. We believe that the full implementation of the concept of protecting the environment in the course of development and the closing of the gap between words and deeds should be the theme of this special session, as well as the key to promoting an international environment and development cooperation geared towards the twenty-first century.

Poverty and backwardness constitute one of the major obstacles to sustainable development. It will be an arduous task for developing countries to eliminate poverty so as to realize their right to development while protecting the environment. To help them to achieve this objective is the key to sustainable development for humankind in the twenty-first century.

The current situation requires that we apply greater determination and broaden our horizons. We must actively participate in international cooperation without focusing only on immediate interests. To this end, the Chinese delegation would like to put forward the following proposals.

First, vigorously to promote scientific and technological cooperation in the realm of the environment and development. Science and technology, as a common asset of humankind, form the very basis for improving patterns of production and consumption and for achieving sustainable development. Developed countries have the capability and historical responsibility — which cannot be shirked — to share with developing countries the achievements of this latest scientific and technological revolution.

Secondly, to enable, in accordance with the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, the developing countries to enhance their national capabilities. Advances in the developing countries will make possible further progress in developed countries. The important issue is to overcome various forms of trade protectionism.

Thirdly, to reverse the trend of a sharp decrease in development funding for developing countries. Adequate financial resources are a necessary condition for improving humankind's ability to implement Agenda 21. We hope that the developed countries will take action to fulfil the commitments they made at Rio.

Finally, of course, developing countries should fully tap their own potential. They cannot and should not follow the same old development patterns of "pollution first and treatment later", but rather take the road of sustainable development right from the beginning.

We have come together for the common benefit of humankind and to build and protect our common home. Our objective is to achieve global sustainable development in the twenty-first century. To strengthen cooperation is the only way to fulfil this historic mission. This requires a close integration of development and environment issues; full consideration of the specific needs of developing countries; and the implementation of common but differentiated responsibilities. This also calls for joint efforts to establish a new global partnership, overcome difficulties and achieve sustainable development. So long as we work together, our future is bright.

The Acting President: I thank His Excellency the State Counsellor of China for his statement.

Mr. Song Jian, State Counsellor of China, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Juan Gabito-Zóboli, Vice-Minister of the Environment of Uruguay.

Mr. Juan Gabito-Zóboli, Vice-Minister of the Environment of Uruguay, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Gabito-Zóboli (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the people and Government of Uruguay, we would like to convey our best wishes to the leaders and delegations present here. We wish also to express our satisfaction at the convening of this session in the framework of the most highly representative international political forum, the General Assembly of the United Nations.

On various occasions, and in particular during the most recent session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held last April, we have reported on the progress achieved by our country since 1992 and on how Uruguay has implemented the Rio de Janeiro commitments in the environmental and social fields. For this reason, we will now focus on a few issues related to the global situation and on the most striking aspects of humankind's successes and failures on the road to sustainable development.

It is clear that in these five years, information, sensitivity and awareness with respect to environmental issues have increased in all areas — within the family, in business, in academic and political circles. This item has been definitively placed on our agenda and included in our plans on a priority basis.

It is noteworthy, for instance, that the requirements of environmental management have been broadly felt in the area of trade, such as through the ISO 14000 norms, and that the Olympic movement, with its strict human values, has also decided to take the environment as the third dimension of its Games, together with sports and culture.

Nonetheless, according to all the assessments that have been made and the reports of different specialized agencies, the efforts deployed have not yet been sufficient to have a clear impact on negative trends at a global level as regards climate change, the depletion or deterioration of natural resources — in particular of drinking water — and the loss of biodiversity.

This situation has complex, long-standing causes, but, paradoxically, the social models and models of production that continue to put irrational pressure on our countries' capacity for environmental conservation and the sustainability of our world remain intact. The greatest responsibility for this situation does not lie with the economic models promoted by the developing countries in response to the need to meet the growing requirements of their peoples, but rather with the patterns of consumption of developed societies, which have not been able to adapt to a world that by definition is finite and interdependent.

We recognize in particular the environmental value of peace, and we appreciate as positive the trend towards denuclearization, disarmament, mine clearance and the settlement of conflicts, which we owe to the efforts of the United Nations and of the countries of greatest military might. War is the greatest and most imminent threat to human beings and to the environment.

But while we must commend this change, which is not yet definitive, we must al[illegible]sk ourselves how much longer humankind will be ab[illegible]o enjoy peace without tackling the social imbalances that lead to the depletion of the world's resources, which sustain that peace.

Contrary to all expectations, there has been no significant redirection of the technical, material and

financial resources previously allocated to the military towards peaceful purposes, particularly in the research and development of new, ecologically sound processes and products.

We also see as positive the worldwide trend that is in evidence in many developing countries, including my own, towards sound, growing economies: we can observe a parallel between macroeconomic policies and the capacity to develop and invest with a view to caring for the environment.

Yet we must also be aware that there are profound social imbalances that are growing worse in many regions and whose solution is our primary responsibility as leaders. It is impossible to divorce the struggle for environmental protection from our imperative struggle against poverty and social marginalization. Manifestations of extreme poverty and lack of opportunity must be resolved, first and foremost because of the ethical imperative to which we are committed, and secondly because no programme of environmental protection can be viable so long as social disintegration persists.

We therefore stress the need for a comprehensive interpretation and implementation of the concept of sustainable development, since we must go beyond the persistent conflict between conservation and development. We must find a way to generate the well-being and human dignity that our peoples require and at the same time to maintain the balance and other conditions needed to renew life on Earth.

In their quest for this kind of development, countries have to be aware of the regional impact of their endeavours insofar as these may affect shared ecosystems. They must also take into account the principle of the international legal responsibility of States for activities that could have a negative impact on third countries, such as the transboundary transport of hazardous waste, radioactive waste in particular.

Available knowledge has already identified the causes and has pointed the way. The potential of technology holds out hope for viable solutions. It is necessary to reaffirm the individual and collective political will to commit ourselves to global strategies that can provide due continuity and can have a significant impact in the medium term.

In this context, a palpable increase in effective North-South cooperation becomes ever more essential as an element to help us attain our shared objectives. Likewise, there must be higher levels of commitment in South-South cooperation. We are therefore concerned at non-compliance with the commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of economically strong countries to programmes in developing countries or areas that are of environmental interest and that would benefit the entire system. This calls into question the real force of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, a principle that Uruguay endorses once again today.

We are also concerned about uncertainty surrounding the fulfilment of goals for the reduction of greenhouse gases by the year 2000 and the setting of new goals for the year 2010. This is a basic responsibility of the industrialized countries and an objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; there has been no significant progress towards this objective.

As Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean observed last year at Buenos Aires, we must achieve effective coordination of the various instruments that emerged from the 1992 Conference and must make optimal use of the relevant resources. We hope that this will be achieved, under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, in the framework of the process of restructuring the United Nations system.

Uruguay continues to implement policies aimed at enhancing its status as a "natural country". We are confident that the evolution of the system of multilateral trade will give due priority to the value of products that are natural and that are produced at minimal environmental cost.

Finally, we reiterate that these aspirations can be realized only under political regimes that guarantee democracy and the full enjoyment of the rights of the individual and of society. The fundamental human right to enjoy the benefits of nature should be exercised in a way that is fair, widespread and united, and should be guaranteed to future generations as well.

The Acting President: I thank the Vice-Minister of the Environment of Uruguay for his statement.

Mr. Juan Gabito-Zóboli, Vice-Minister of the Environment of Uruguay, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Utula U. Samana, CMG, Chairman of the Delegation of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Utula U. Samana, CMG, Chairman of the Delegation of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Samana (Papua New Guinea): I am greatly honoured to address this important session of the General Assembly as the special envoy of the Government of Papua New Guinea.

The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, on environment and development, provides yet again an opportunity for the world community to strive towards the rebuilding of the spirit of Rio, and to regain confidence in addressing the pitfalls of the implementation of Agenda 21. At this decisive moment of history, we are further challenged to maintain the spirit of partnership that evolved from Rio, to adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and to continue to take firm and responsible actions aimed at reducing unsustainable consumption and production, at decelerating environmental degradation, at alleviating poverty and at restoring the critical balance of the global environment, upon which the livelihood of the whole of humanity depends.

I regret to state, however, that the review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 raises serious doubts about our ability to work as partners in fulfilling the expectations and the goals of sustainable development and in carrying out the related programmes since the Earth Summit in Rio. The spirit of partnership forged five years ago and the objectives and goals of Agenda 21 continue to be undermined by myopic political vision and unilateral decisions.

It is alarming to note that the global environment outlook, as presented to us by the leading international authorities, looks gloomy. The dangers of continued industrial pollution, the impact of globalization, the unsustainable consumption and production patterns of the industrialized countries and the declining levels of official development assistance continue to hinder progress at the practical level. This gathering provides an opportunity for much-needed confidence-building.

Despite its limited resources, my Government has taken considerable steps in the face of rising demands to determine national policies and programmes to guide and encourage all sectors of the community to value the importance of taking responsible decisions towards sustainable use and management of our natural resources within the context of achieving sustainable development. Guided and encouraged by the collective spirit of Rio, we have endeavoured to live up to the requirements and objectives of Agenda 21 at the local and regional levels, where we have been able to do so.

For instance, Papua New Guinea has moved to ban the transportation of hazardous and toxic wastes in the Pacific region. We have adopted stringent conservation and management policies for our exclusive economic zones and the marine environment. We have enacted laws to comply with international standards, where possible, including environmental impact assessments and environmental impact plans. With other Melanesian States of the South Pacific, we also took a bold move and adopted a code of conduct for the management of our sovereign rainforests.

Our regional initiatives include a comprehensive approach to addressing environmental concerns with respect to oceans and coastal management. In this context, we call upon all States to join us in our efforts to keep the Pacific free from nuclear activities. We also recognize and support the call by small island developing States for assistance in the clean-up of radioactive waste left from colonial legacies, including further research on the impact of radioactive materials on human health, and for the restoration of lands and indigenous peoples affected by those activities.

As a member of the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS), we are concerned at the lack of progress on the whole issue of climate change and at the interests of a particular industry opposing further action to solve the real danger of global warming and sea-level rise. Activities that pose serious dangers to the global atmosphere and contribute to sea-level rise that directly threatens the very existence of peoples throughout the world should invoke our human conscience to take precautionary measures to ensure our own protection and the collective survival of the entire world. In this connection, we firmly stand by the AOSIS protocol for further reductions in carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.

Papua New Guinea is a State party to numerous post-Rio international instruments and agreements dedicated to the conservation and management of resources and the environment, such as the agreement relating to straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish

stocks, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. International law will continue to play a major role in the future and we are grateful for the work done by the United Nations Environment Programme in this field. We believe that there needs to be further progress in areas that have not been adequately addressed in the past five years, taking into account fundamental principles such as prior notification and the precautionary principle as guiding principles for future international cooperation.

We will continue our commitments to encourage local authorities, traditional landowners, community elders, women, youths, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to take responsible actions in the implementation of the goals and objectives of Agenda 21.

To enhance our efforts, we will require much needed international financial and technological assistance. These are two of the most critical issues that the special session has highlighted. My delegation strongly supports the views expressed by some that political will must be demonstrated unconditionally and in the true spirit of partnership in the areas of technology transfer and provision of new and additional financial resources.

As we prepare to accept new challenges and responsibilities within the framework of multilateral arrangements, it would be most encouraging, as a first step, if all outstanding commitments in Agenda 21 — such as financial and technological assistance — were fulfilled within time-bound targets. In this regard, Papua New Guinea can support the important priorities which the United Nations should focus on for the next five years in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Building on the spirit of Rio, as we breathe new energy from this session, we commit ourselves to achieve sustainable development. We must aim to reverse policies and attitudes that contradict the goals and objectives of Agenda 21, and refrain from applying double standards when it comes to the concerns of sustainable development that affect the global community as a whole.

May I also add that the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests made great progress in further elaborating the forest principles and in adopting a programme of action at the international level. Instead of indulging in the positive aspects of the Panel on Forests, as a tropical timber country we are not convinced that the playing field has been levelled for sustainable development and the conservation of all species of forest resources. On that basis, we call for a stronger regime that will ensure legally binding commitments, with common and differentiated responsibilities. We have thus indicated our openness in favour of an international process on a forests convention with strong environmental provisions.

We recognize that the degradation of the environment can seriously hamper progressive development and can also have a serious impact on the quality of life. From this perspective, the expenses of implementing Agenda 21 in the critical areas of maintaining environmental quality, conservation of biodiversity, water resources and the reduction of atmospheric pollution are an important investment in sustaining the quality of life on Earth. Without such a commitment to maintain the health of our global ecology and serious efforts to sustain our ecological resources, we and future generations are doomed.

It is therefore imperative that we make a serious and critical appraisal of the current situation and learn from the mistakes of the past and move towards the progressive mobilization of financial and technical resources at the national and international level aimed at implementing the goals and objectives of Agenda 21, to achieve sustainable development at a practical level where people matter.

My country, Papua New Guinea, reaffirms its commitment to the goals and principles of Agenda 21 as a guiding blueprint towards sustainable development. We trust that this conference will set in motion a greater vigour and hope for better and progressive changes. Guided by our collective vision as custodians of the global environment, working within the framework of Agenda 21, we will be able to live up to our commitments and obligations as individuals and as nations as we enter the next millennium.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Papua New Guinea, for his statement.

Mr. Utula U. Samana, CMG, Chairman of the delegation of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua, Chairman of the delegation of Algeria.

Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua, Chairman of the delegation of Algeria, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Five years have elapsed since the historic Rio Conference. The results which we note are indeed modest if we compare them with the road that lies ahead of us, which is an urgent path. The world today is characterized by an exacerbation of divergences. Although the acceleration of economies opens up real prospects, it has also made the developing countries endure negative repercussions and has created new challenges. The result is the instability of those countries, their marginalization and the exclusion of a great number of them from the new international economic order. Moreover, hopes based on partnership and international cooperation as an instrument to insure sustainable development for all countries have proved remote indeed. Talks on the subject of sustainable development are experiencing a gap with regard to daily realities and are falling victim to generalities.

The developed countries undertook a number of commitments in Rio, in particular to provide for additional and new financial resources, to provide for technology transfers and ecologically clean transfers under favourable conditions and to support the efforts of the developing countries. Most of these commitments have not been respected. In addition, official development assistance is now on the decline and technology transfers have not taken place.

Within this framework, some advocate the private sector and direct foreign investment as a panacea. Although their role is undeniable in the field of development, they cannot be considered the sole instruments to replace a system of international cooperation for development. In addition, some of the developed countries advocate modalities for consumption and production that in fact are not lasting and that aim at imposing new standards on the developing countries under the pretext of alleviating the burden they bear with regard to natural resources.

The Rio Summit consecrated the principle of common but differentiated responsibility as the basis for the international community's work. Unfortunately, we are still awaiting implementation of this principle. We are also witnessing attempts to reopen negotiations on Agenda 21 on the pretext of providing broader access at the national level and of giving greater responsibility to the countries of the South.

The countries of the South have made great efforts and sacrifices which could have led to more significant results had they enjoyed the requisite support from the international community and, in particular, from their partners in the North. For its part, Algeria, like the countries of the South, has worked over the last five years towards carrying out its responsibilities at the national and international levels, as its contribution to the implementation of Agenda 21.

At the institutional level, we have established the Supreme Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development and a number of sectoral institutions at the local and national levels to ensure policies for sustainable development which reconcile protection of the environment, the sustainable use of natural resources and balanced economic and social development. Despite its economic and social difficulties, Algeria has firmly embarked on a number of initiatives designed to preserve its natural resources and ensure their sustainability, develop cover and top soil, combat desertification and soil erosion, promote development in rural areas and control sources of pollution. We have also encouraged action by civil society, in particular action by the burgeoning number of non-governmental organizations.

However, the State's room to manoeuvre has clearly diminished because of an increase in areas needing finance and a decrease in financial resources which are now allocated to other priorities. This compels Algeria to secure loans for specific projects.

Algeria believes, therefore, that this special session represents an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm the need for international cooperation within the framework of the principles and the objectives of the Rio Conference. Here, we should like to state the following.

First, the principle of common but differentiated responsibility is extremely important and we need to emphasize it to safeguard our recommendations.

Secondly, although sectoral action is urgent, this should not absolve the international community from its duty to define a global concept of development.

Thirdly, on the eve of the new millennium, the international community must adequately and realistically support the efforts of developing countries. In that context, the commitments of the countries of the North with regard to financial resources and technology transfer must be translated into realistic and quantifiable actions.

Fourth, the Commission on Sustainable Development must provide for better follow-up in these two areas in

particular, since they determine any real progress regarding implementation of the Rio commitments. Moreover, the Commission must adopt a more balanced concept of sustainable development.

Fifth, the resources of the Global Environment Facility must be increased and its activities stepped up to combat desertification.

Sixth, more generally speaking, in addition to a possible partial readjustment of debts, Algeria advocates greater participation by international financial institutions in the financing of environmental protection programmes.

Seventh, we need to provide the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with resources to enable it to discharge its various functions in the area of environmental protection throughout the world. The ministerial Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme must be adopted.

Finally, the reforms and present restructuring efforts of the Organization must back UNEP as an irreplaceable instrument for international cooperation for development in the broad sense of the word.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Algeria for his statement.

Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua, Chairman of the delegation of Algeria, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.